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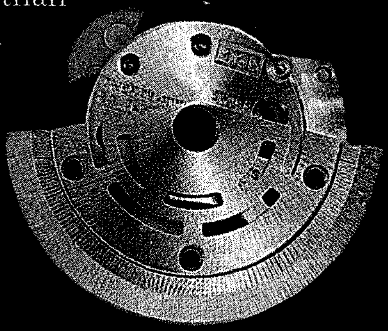

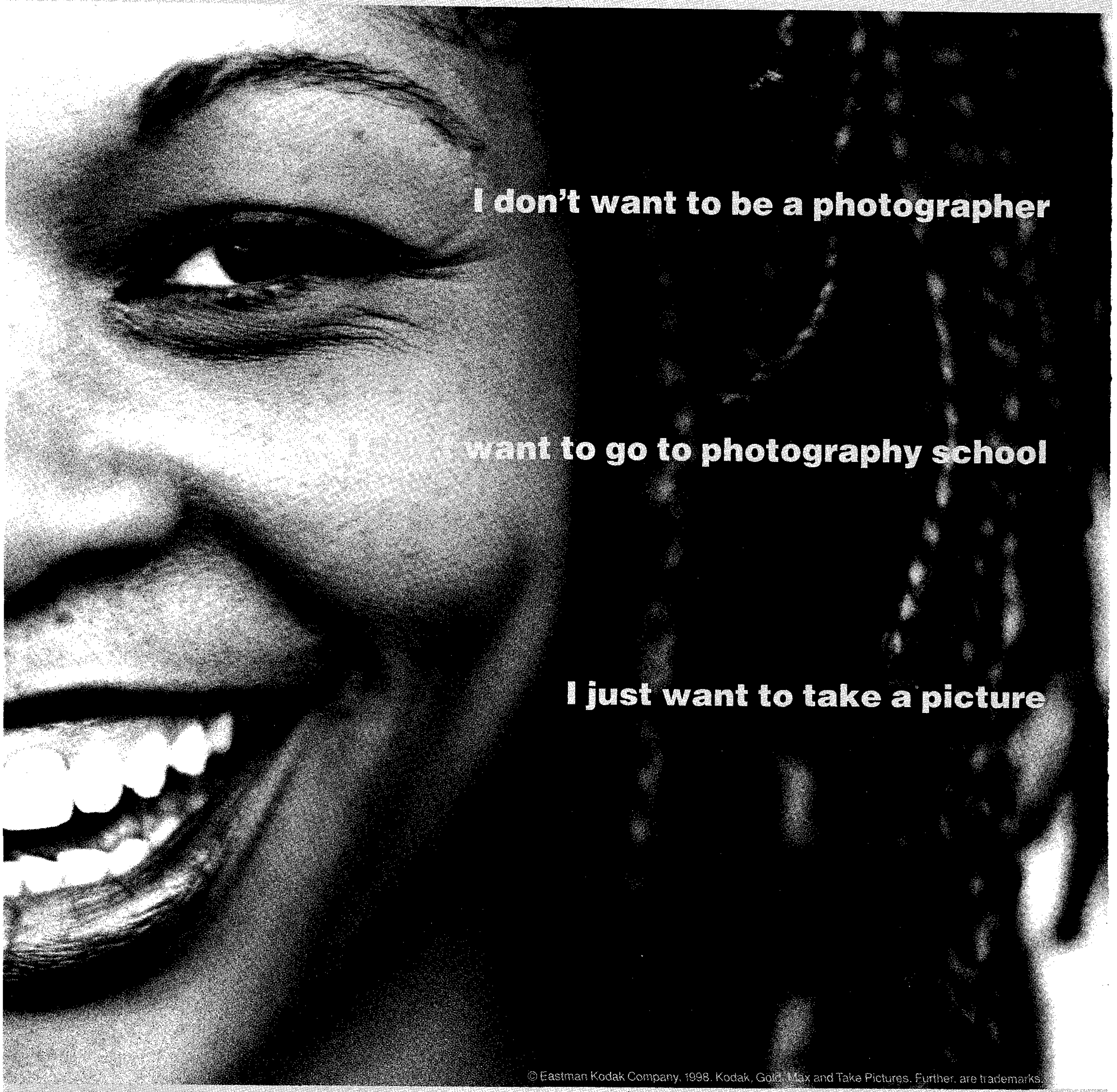
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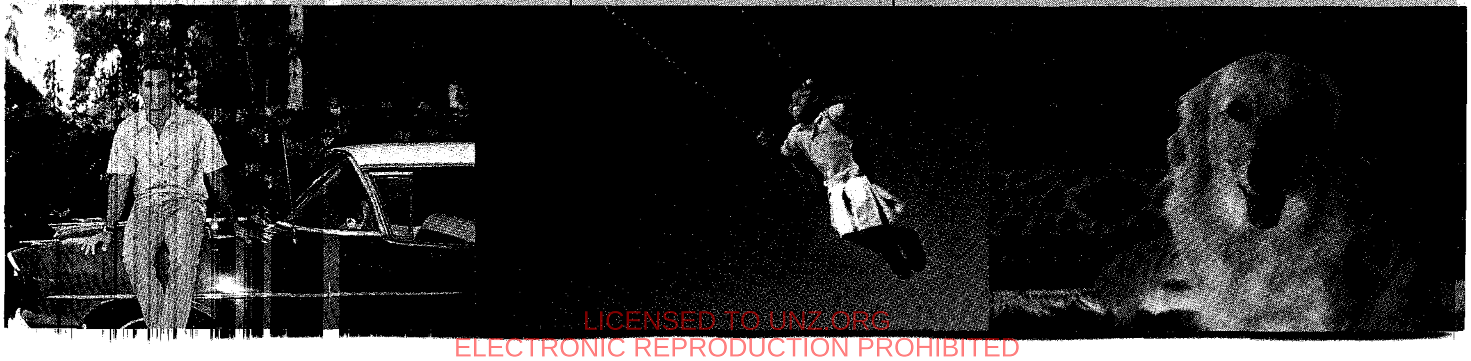

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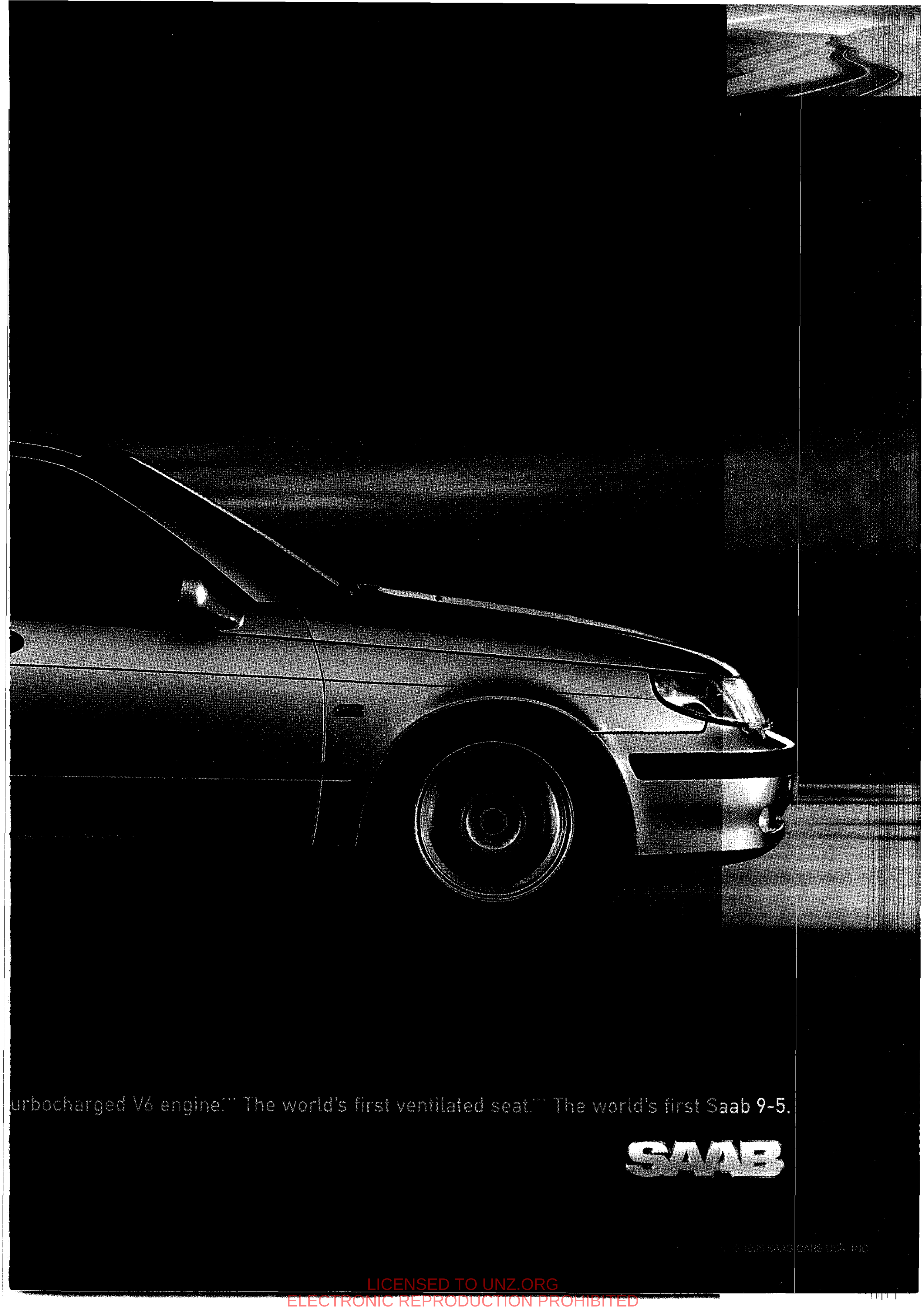
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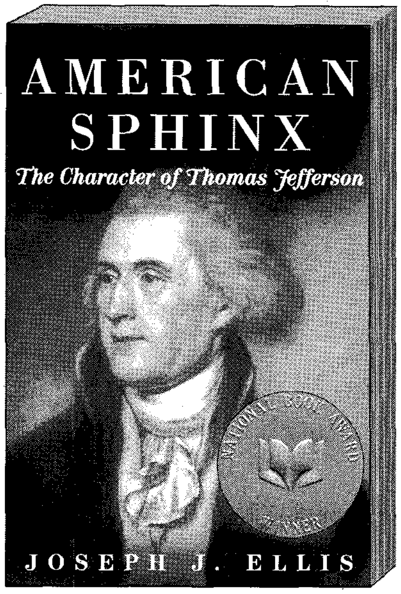

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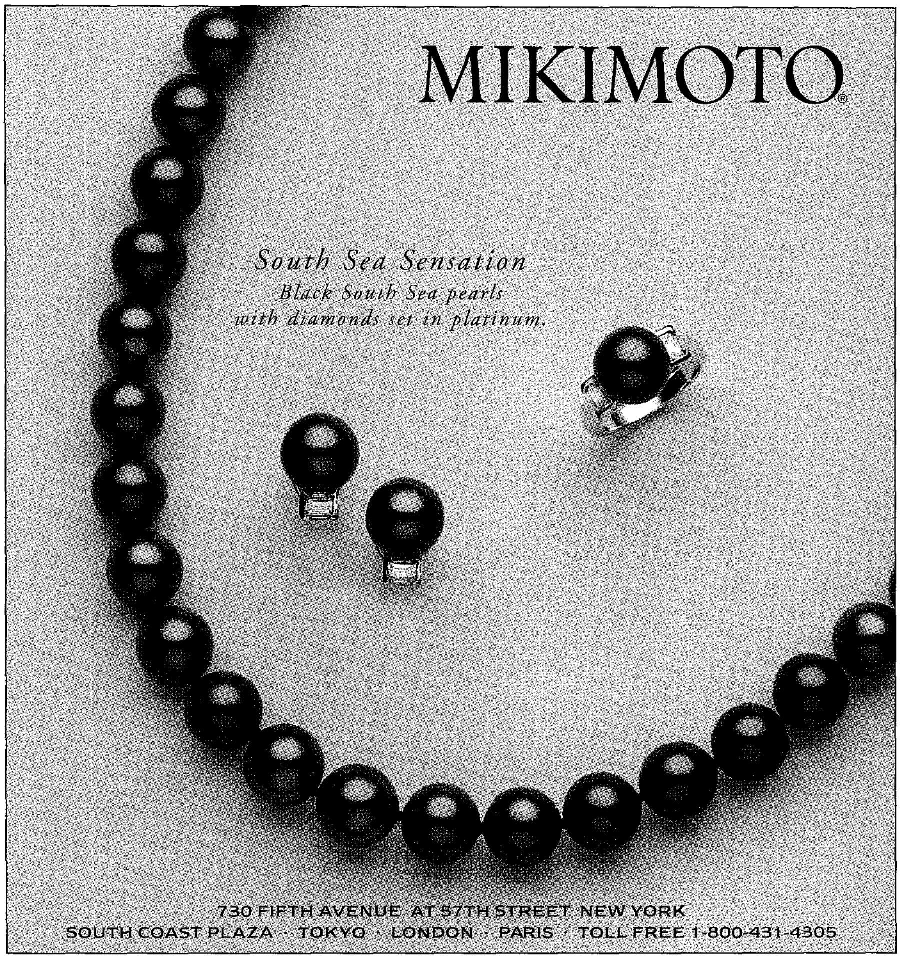

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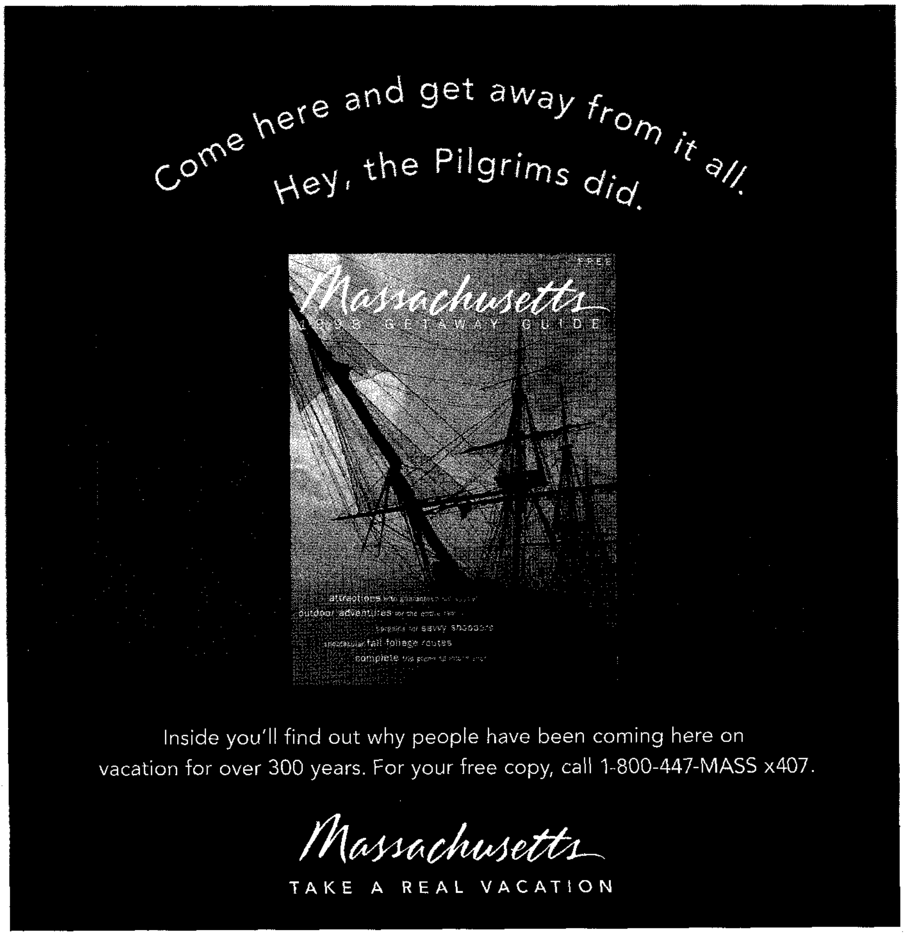

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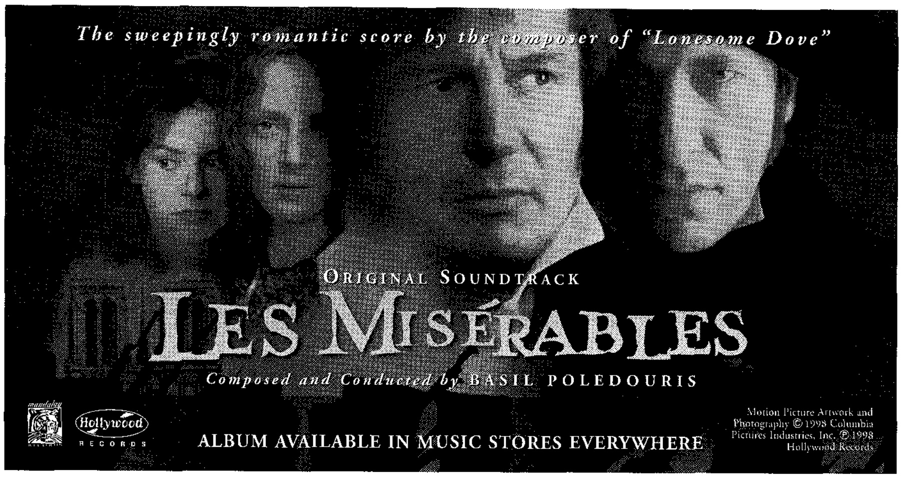

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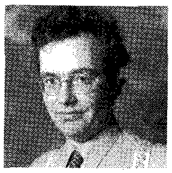
"Atlantic" and "Beauty Story," to be published next month. His television script "Nureyev Unzipped" was recently produced.



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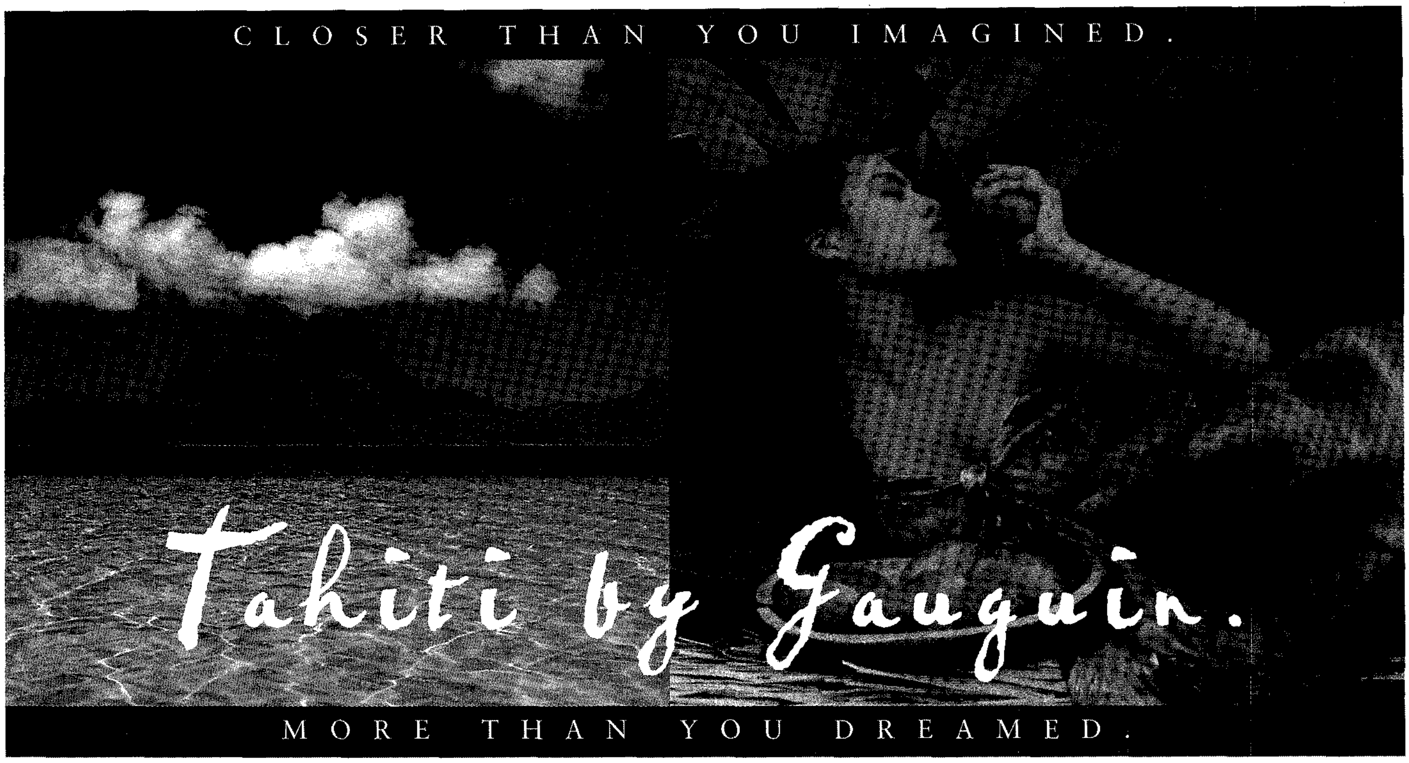
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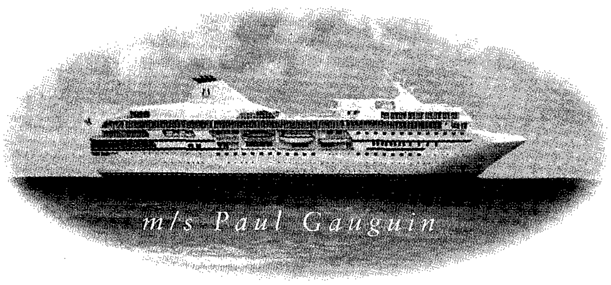

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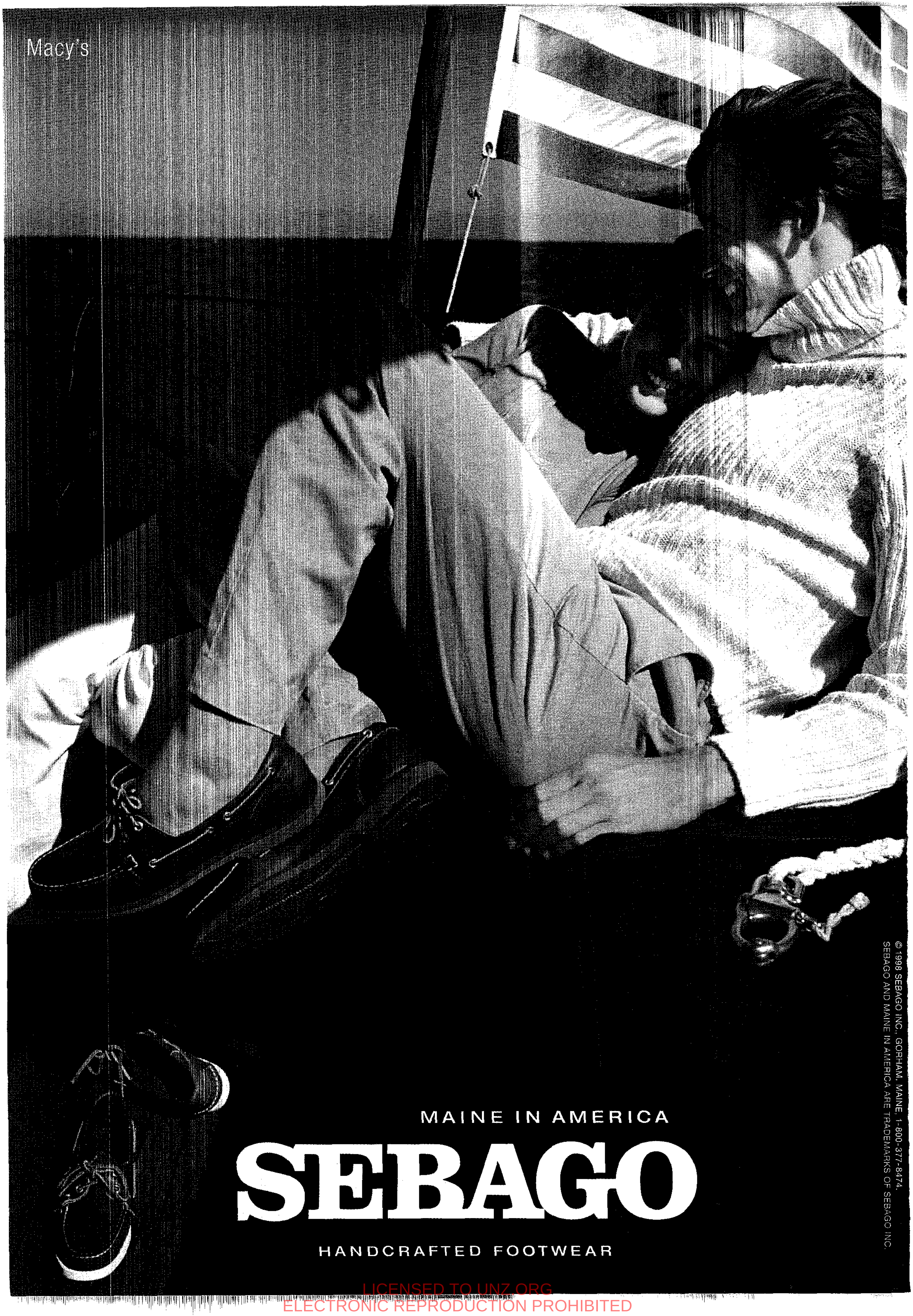
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COMMENT

EUROPE REINVENTED

Why America still thinks the Continent is economically backward.

EUROPE, as any self-respecting American businessman will tell you, is history: a quaint place for a vacation (if you don't mind a room without a shower), appetizing food (if you avoid Ireland), and the odd interesting little movie (if subtitles don't bother you)—but that's about it. Finit. Kaput. The rest is nothing but cosseted businesses, bloated welfare states, Bolshie trade unions, and taxes so high it's scarcely worth getting out of bed in the morning. No wonder economists use the term "Eurosclerosis" to describe conditions on the other side of the Atlantic. At international summits these days, European leaders spend much of their time listening meekly as American officials lecture them on the virtues of Yankee capitalism.

The American triumphalists have plenty of evidence to cite—unemployment in Europe is more than twice as high as it is in the United States, for instance, and mainland Europe has been in recession, or near recession, for most of the nineties—but lately some things have happened that don't fit their theory. Italy, long a byword for fiscal profligacy, has reduced its budget deficit by two-thirds in just five years. The Netherlands, once a case study in Eurosclerosis, has been creating jobs at the same rate that the United States has. And Ireland, for decades so poor that it couldn't support its tiny population, is now known as the Celtic Tiger, and has been growing by almost ten per cent annually. These are not aberrations: for the past couple of years, the European economy as a whole has been improving steadily; inflation is at one of its lowest levels in fifty years; most European governments can boast stronger public finances than they have seen in decades; even joblessness is falling.

The reason for this turn of events is no mystery. From Helsinki to Madrid, governments have been forced to bash their economies into shape to meet the entry requirements for the final stage of the European Monetary Union, which begins January 1st, with the launch of the euro. If this process continues, then Europe, with its vast human and physical resources, could easily reëmerge as the world's dominant economic region.

That statement is less fanciful than it sounds. Euroland, an eleven-country zone stretching from Portugal to Finland, will start out with more people than the United States has (three hundred million versus two hundred and seventy million) and with an economy

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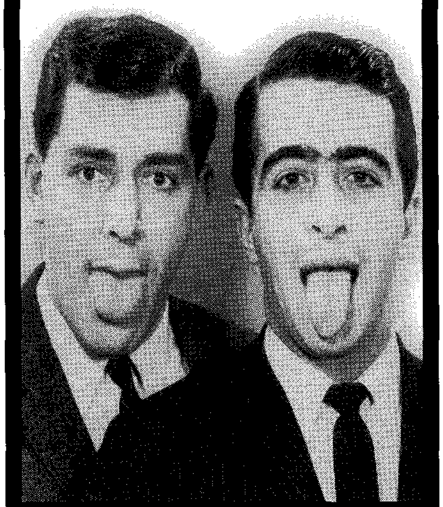

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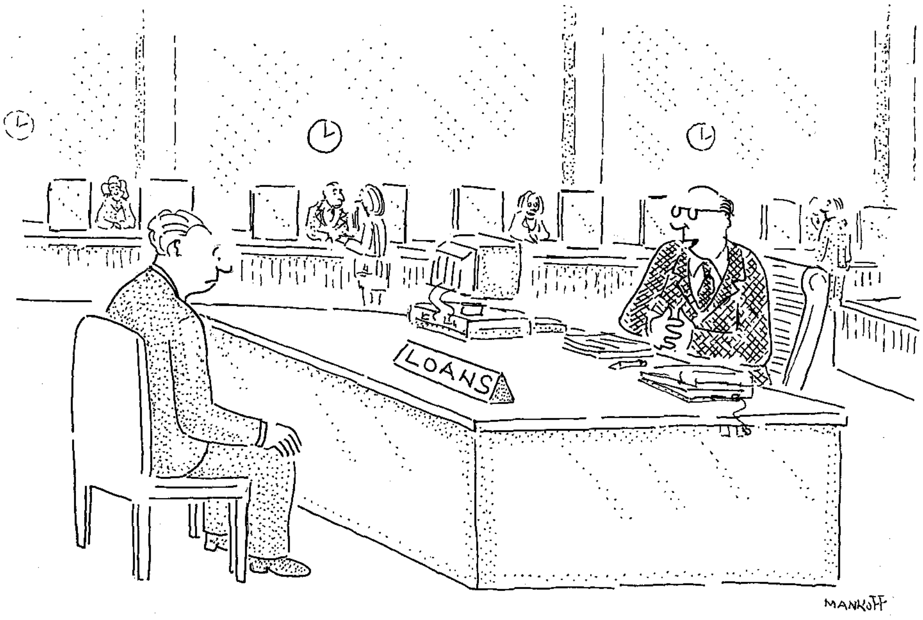

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of about the same size. If, as seems likely, Britain, Denmark, Greece, and Sweden join the monetary system during the next few years, Euroland will economically dwarf the United States, Canada, and Mexico combined. Add a dozen or so potential members from Eastern Europe and the makings of a truly vast power are discernible.

Skeptics say that Europe is too divided and too ossified to exploit its potential, but they may be underestimating the power of economics to change outmoded attitudes. Soon Málaga, Leipzig, and Galway will become interchangeable parts of a single economic region. It is not unreasonable to sketch a future in which firms expand across borders to exploit economies of scale, urban professionals move from Berlin to London as easily as they do from Los Angeles to New York, and individual governments radically reform their policies on taxes, employment laws, and welfare benefits. "To the extent that European Monetary Union becomes a catalyst for economic reform, not only in the fiscal area, but also in labor and product markets, there are likely to be substantial benefits for participating countries," a recent report of the International Monetary Fund noted.

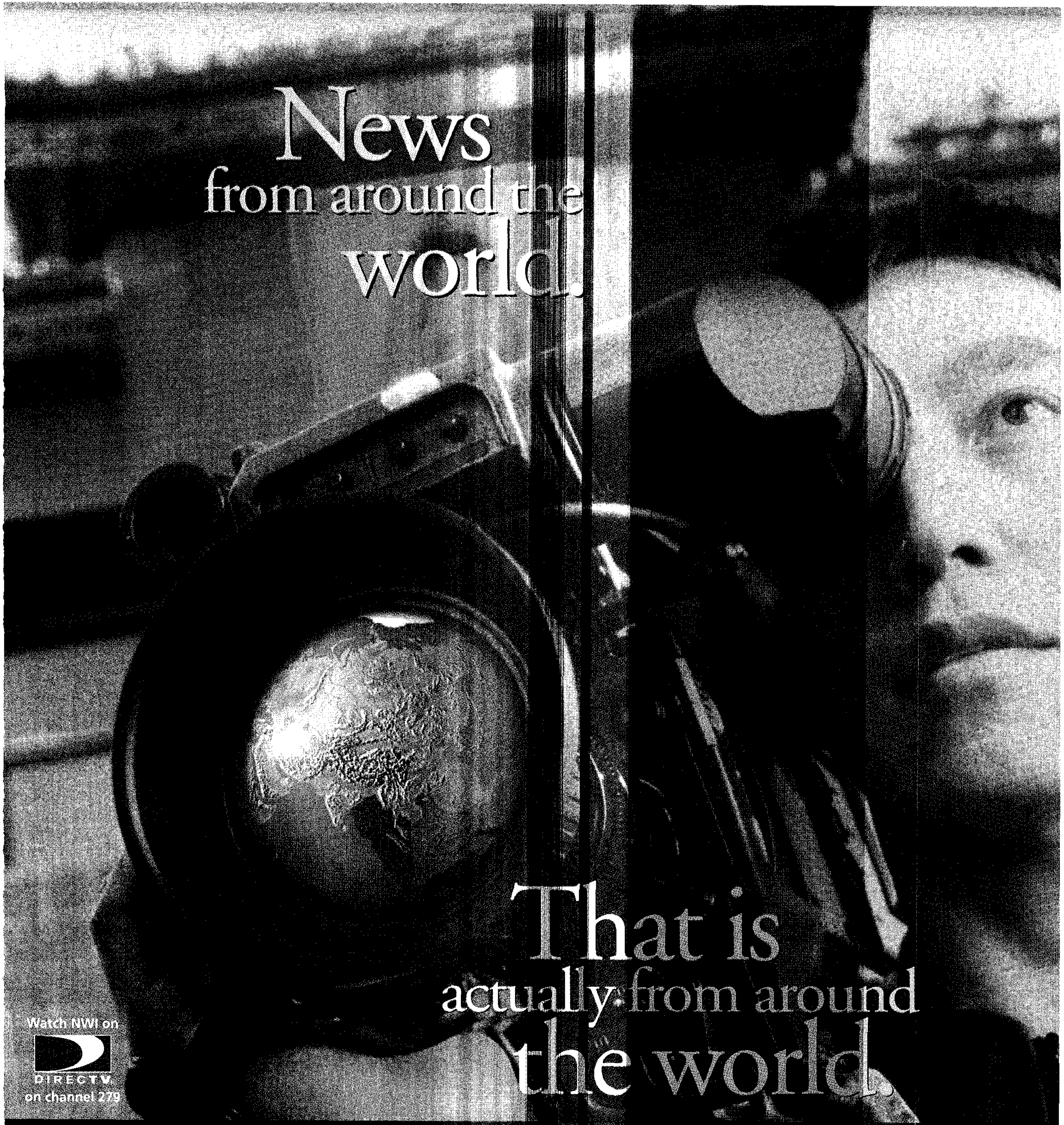
Exactly what Europe will look like in five decades is difficult to predict, but it is likely that the Continent will be a lot richer and a lot less heterogeneous. In a modern economy, the ultimate sources of growth are educated people, good ideas, and aggressive entrepreneurship. Europe has always had plenty of the first two categories, and recently it has been producing more of the third. Companies like Bertelsmann, Reuters, BMW, and LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, are more than a match for their Asian and American rivals. As economic integration proceeds, multinational leaders like these will no doubt emerge in other industries as well.

Such economic changes will have social and cultural repercussions, too; in some areas, they already have. Although most European high culture remains resolutely parochial, popular culture, which is far more closely attuned to the market, has gone Euro with a vengeance. Take the much hyped revival of "Cool Britannia." The most fashionable soccer club in London, Chelsea, is now managed by an Italian, Gianluca Vialli, who succeeded a dreadlocked Dutchman, Ruud Gullit, and it has players from nine different nations. Visitors to Old Trafford, the home of Manchester United, will hear the locals singing "Championes, Championes, Olé, Olé, Olé," and revellers in local night clubs can find their ears popping to techno music that originated in Belgium.

The dissolution of traditional European classifications is examined in a number of articles in this issue. Isabel Hilton describes how, with the introduction of the euro, national leaders are willing to chip away at their countries' identities in the service of a common currency. Fintan O'Toole, in an account of the recent Irish peace agreement, explains how inhabitants of Belfast can now view themselves as British or Irish, or both. Luke Jennings details how Marco Pierre White, a working-class lad from Leeds, turned himself into a celebrity French chef based in London—the only Briton ever to earn three stars from the Michelin guide. (This is a good example of the new European's capacity for self-invention.)

Stories like these show that Europe is changing far more rapidly than most Americans realize, and not just because you can now take a train from London to Paris in three hours. In many ways, Europe is becoming more like America: more practical, more homogeneous, more consumer-driven. (Britain, which Napoleon called a nation of shopkeepers, is now a nation of shoppers.) Some Europeans, especially the French, interpret this as American cultural imperialism, but they are mistaken. These features are characteristic of modern capitalism, not simply of the United States. It just happens that capitalism was given free rein on this side of the Atlantic before anywhere else.

Eventually, economic integration may well produce a United States of Europe—something that Victor Hugo dreamed of a century and a half ago. This won't happen immediately, but it is worth recalling that the concept of Europe has been around for about two thousand years (give or take a Roman emperor or two), and it has often been written off before. "The glory of Europe is extinguished forever," Edmund Burke wrote in 1790. (Like many Britons before and since, he was put out by how the French were behaving.) A century later, Fyodor Dostoyevsky described Europe as "a graveyard," albeit "a most precious graveyard." And in August, 1914, the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, commented, "The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime." Those were prescient words, but as Europe's cataclysmic century draws to a close there are bright flickerings on the Continental skyline. —JOHN CASSIDY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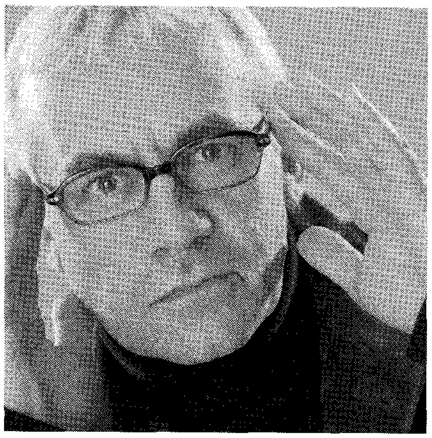

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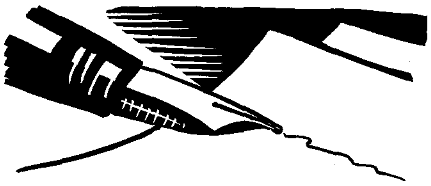

MODERN ADDICTION

David Samuels's "Saying Yes to Drugs" (March 23rd) describes an ironic state of affairs: in the United States, addiction is called a disease but is not usually treated medically. It's true that every thought or feeling we have is expressed biochemically, and that any behavior pattern, including addiction, is represented physiologically, but physiological expression does not equal disease, as Samuels seems to think. The fight at Hazelden about whether people addicted to alcohol should be treated with drugs is less a fight about what addiction really is than a question of whether or not we are at the mercy of our biochemistry—and research clearly shows that we are not.

JASON A. SEIDEL
Buffalo, N.Y.

Mr. Samuels mentions that the Hazelden Foundation is lobbying for more health-insurance funding, which is important to them because Hazelden patients pay thousands of dollars for country-club treatment. Samuels doesn't mention that the original storefront Alcoholics Anonymous program is available to anyone, free. Hazelden and other corporate recovery centers represent a symptom of a consumer society's addiction to throwing money at its problems.

RICH SEELEY
Cambridge, Mass.

THE HUMAN TOUCH

As a retired cardiologist with forty years' experience, I do not question the assertion that a machine can be more accurate than a physician in the interpretation of an electrocardiogram ("No Mistake," by Atul Gawande, March 30th). Nor do I question Gawande's report that the trend toward superspecialization may result in fewer errors in the treatment of very specific conditions. But understanding a patient's medical background, his family history, his personality, and even his body language—these things are important to a diagnosis, and a machine or a person who acts like one cannot comprehend them.

WALTER NEWMAN, M.D.,
F.A.C.P., F.A.C.C.
Briarcliff Manor, N.Y.

BLINDING US WITH SCIENCE

John Updike's concise description of Isaac Newton's experiments in optics (Books, March 30th) is a rare example of the power of clear words to make science exciting for the lay reader. Science has been given exceptional freedom to corrupt our language. People do not instinctively dislike science; they are simply excluded from its pleasures by the arcane languages used systematically in all its branches—jargon that American teachers are extremely reluctant to translate. Small wonder, then, that American students of math and science are ranked so poorly against their peers in other countries, where plain language is insisted upon.

JAMES O'ROURKE, M.D.
Farmington, Conn.

LETTERS FROM GERMANY

In "Penmanship Counts" (The Mail, January 26th), it is claimed that the Nazis emphasized the Gothic script Sütterlin. The reality is that in an order issued on September 1, 1941, the Nazis did away with Gothic lettering and promoted the *deutsche Normalschrift*, the "normal" characters that are in use today. One of the reasons may have been that the Gothic characters were difficult for the residents of occupied countries to read. Another possibility is that Hitler associated Gothic script with the Jews and made it his task to change it. One thing is certain: Sütterlin's association with the Nazis, however common, is completely unjustified.

FRITZ NEUBAUER, Ph.D.
Faculty for Linguistics and Literature
Universität Bielefeld
Bielefeld, Germany

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "The Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They can also be faxed to 212-840-8489 or sent via E-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Bobby Supreme—The 29th Street Rep presents a play by J. B. Miller, about the downfall of an Andrew Dice Clay/Howard Stern-style comic. Previews April 23-30. May 1 at 8. (212 W. 29th St. 465-0575.)

Degenerate Art—A collaborative work from the Irondale Ensemble Project which explores society's periodic fury over art. In previews through May 1. Opens May 2 at 8. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 633-1292.)

The Dying Gaul—A struggling writer gets seduced by Hollywood in a new play by Craig Lucas. Mark Brokaw is the director. Previews begin April 24. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874.)

From Above—In Tom Donaghy's latest, a young woman in mourning is visited by a man who claims to be her dead husband. David Warren is the director. Preview on April 22. Opens April 23 at 7. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

High Society—A musical based on Philip Barry's play "The Philadelphia Story." With songs by Cole Porter and a book by Arthur Kopit. Christopher Renshaw is the director. In previews through April 26. Opens April 27 at 7:15. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Honour—The life of a middle-aged poet (Jane Alexander) is turned upside down when a young journalist (Laura Linney) arrives to interview her writer husband (Robert Foxworth), in a drama by the Australian playwright Joanna Murray-Smith. Gerald Gutierrez is the director. In previews through April 25. Opens April 26 at 6:45. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

The Judas Kiss—Liam Neeson portrays Oscar Wilde in David Hare's new drama, in a production by London's Almeida Theatre Company, directed by Richard Eyre. Previews April 23-28. Opens April 29 at 7:15. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Mr. Peters' Connections—Peter Falk returns to the stage to portray a retired pilot in Arthur Miller's new play. Previews begin April 28. (Signature Theatre, 555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

Power Plays—Three one-act comedies written by and starring Elaine May and Alan Arkin, who are joined by Anthony Arkin and Jeannie Berlin. Presented by Manhattan Theatre Club. In previews. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Too Jewish Two—Avi Hoffman's salute to the original Borscht Belt comics, a sequel to "Too Jewish?" In previews through April 26. Opens April 28 at 8. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

OPENED RECENTLY

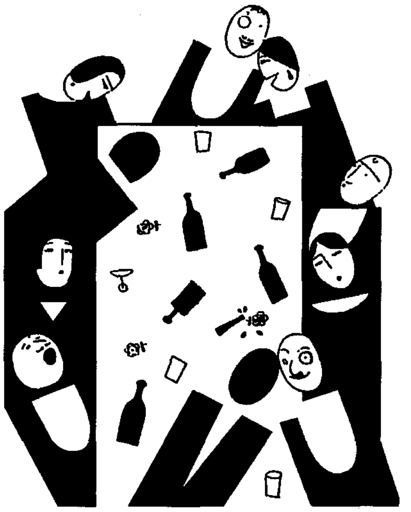
Ah, Wilderness!—A Lincoln Center Theatre revival of Eugene O'Neill's comedy, set on Independence Day in 1906. (Vivian Beaumont. 239-6200. Closes May 3.)

Aloha, Las Vegas—A Pan Asian Rep staging of a play by Edward Sakamoto, about a Hawaiian widower who considers moving to Nevada. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 245-2660.)

Alter Egos—A one-man show written and performed by Jon McGovern. Saturdays at 9:30. (Solo Arts Group, 36 W. 17th St. 591-2719.)

Art—Yasmina Reza's farce is a splendid vehicle for three masterly actors, Victor Garber, Alan Alda, and Alfred Molina. They portray friends whose fifteen-year relationship is threatened when one of them buys a large white canvas for two hundred thousand francs. Directed by Matthew Warchus. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/23/98.) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Bad Sex with Bud Kemp—A one-woman show about single life in New York, written and performed by Sandra Tsing Loh. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 787-3392. Closes May 10.)



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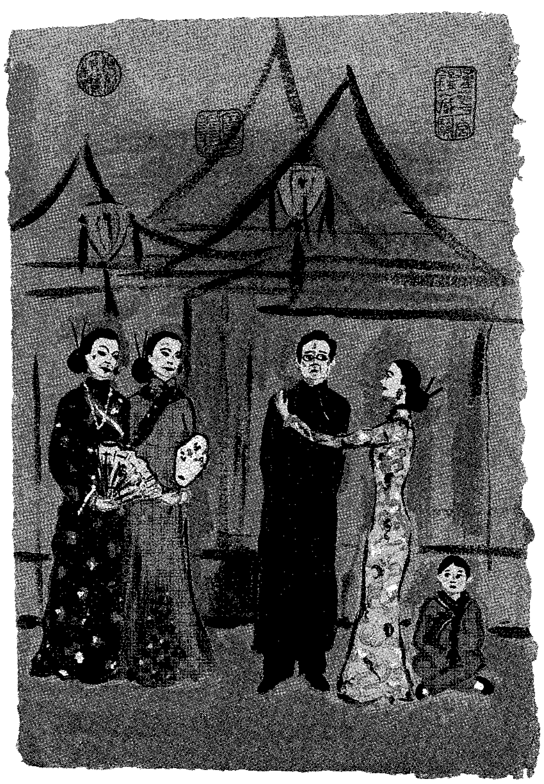
The Beauty Queen of Leenane—The precocious Anglo-Irish playwright Martin McDonagh's riveting winter's tale, set in a rural Irish cottage, about an aged mother and her virgin forty-year-old daughter, who is trapped in a punishing solitude. It's a simple, primitive story, yet it is filled with complex emotional surprises and reversals. (3/16/98) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)



David Henry Hwang's "Golden Child."

Cabaret—This mesmerizing production of the Kander and Ebb musical doesn't have the high-gloss veneer of the celebrated movie version; here, the dancers at the Kit Kat Klub, the symbol of anything-goes Weimar Germany, look shell-shocked and stigmatized, and go through their paces in torn stockings. As the Emcee (the Joel Grey role), Alan Cumming is astonishing—with his bruised-looking body, his huge, knowing eyes, and his satanic energy, he's a spectacle of mixed messages. Natasha Richardson, as Sally Bowles, the role that made Liza Minnelli a star, casts a spectral glow. Everything in this show, the brainchild of the director Sam Mendes, seems to ask the audience to what extent we are participating in—perhaps collaborating in—the events unfolding before our eyes. (4/6/98) (Kit Kat Klub, 124 W. 43rd St. 719-1300.)

The Chairs—The British troupe Théâtre de Complicité's staging of Ionesco's one-act tragic farce—in which two nonagenarians (played by the English comic veterans Richard Briers and Geraldine McEwan) act out the folly and fierce solitude of their dwindling days—has established finally and forever the indubitable poetry and genius of the play, written nearly half a century ago. Superbly directed by Simon McBurney, the production is also aided by the Quay Brothers' splendid water-stained gray-plank set, which gives Ionesco's ontological void the shape of a floating, threadbare island world on the edge of nothingness. (4/13/98) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Cripple of Inishmaan—Martin McDonagh's bittersweet comedy is probably his best play so far, but you'd never know it from Jerry Zaks's heavy-handed, drab production, which has drained all sense of place, fun, and character from the script. (The sets, costumes, and casting are generic; so is the direction.) Despite a stellar performance by Ruaidhri Conroy, who starred in the original National Theatre version, the show lies there like a lump of soda bread that didn't rise. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes May 10.)

The Death of Frank—A mystery by Stephen Belber. (Synchronicity Space, 55 Mercer St. 330-6824. Closes May 2.)

The Deep Blue Sea—Blythe Danner and Edward Herrmann star in a revival of Terence Rattigan's 1952 drama. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300.)

The Diary of Anne Frank—Theatrically, this reworking of the 1955 play by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett is an improvement, and the cast is fine. But the play's realism is its fundamental flaw: we can't really re-create for ourselves what Anne's dreadful situation was like. (12/15/97) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

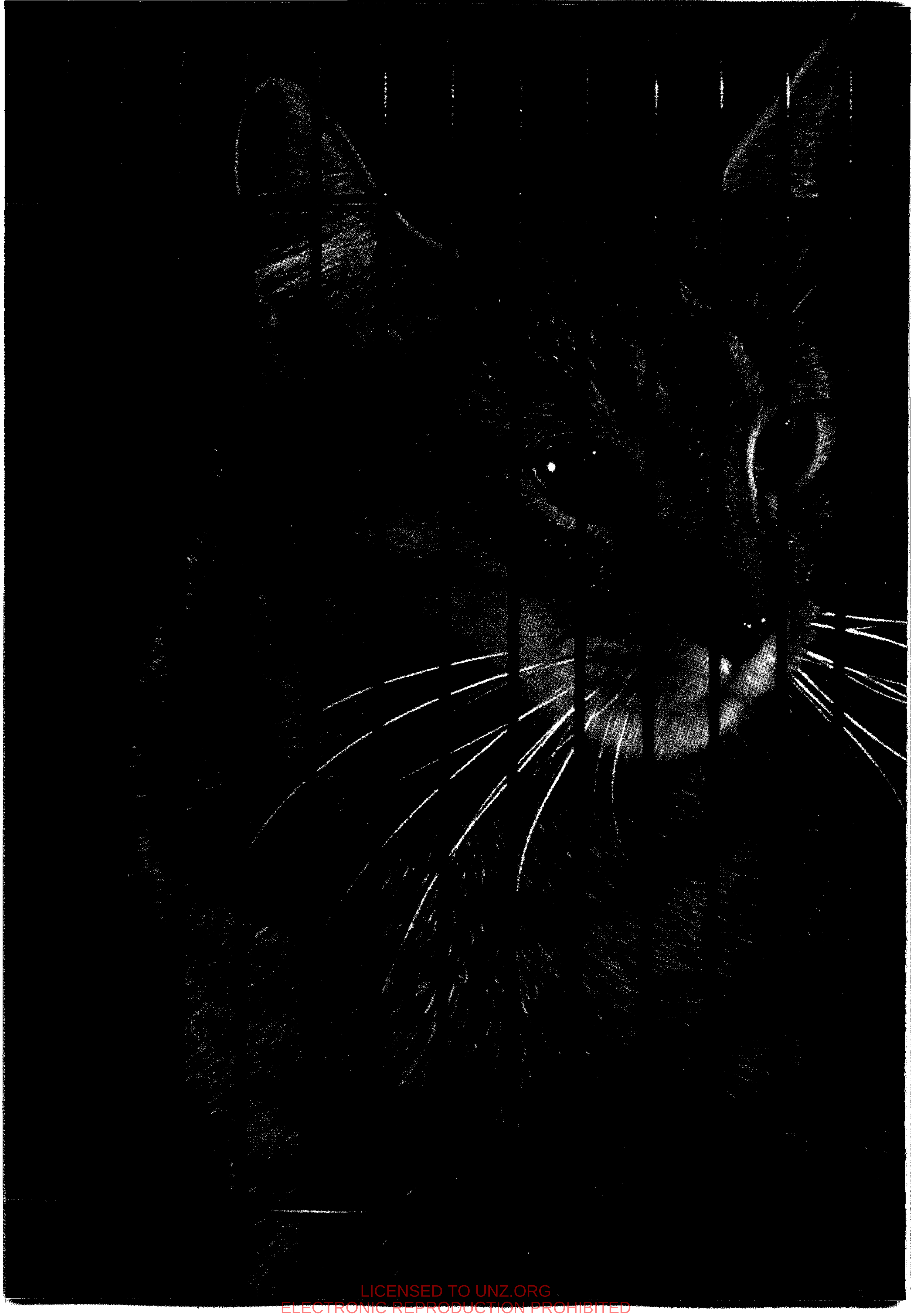
Dinah Was—Oliver Goldstick's play about the late singer Dinah Washington (Yvette Freeman) trots out every blues-queen cliché in the book. But never mind: Freeman's powerful performance and evocative singing, and the general high spirits, make this a memorable evening. Directed by David Petrarca. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523. Closes April 26.)

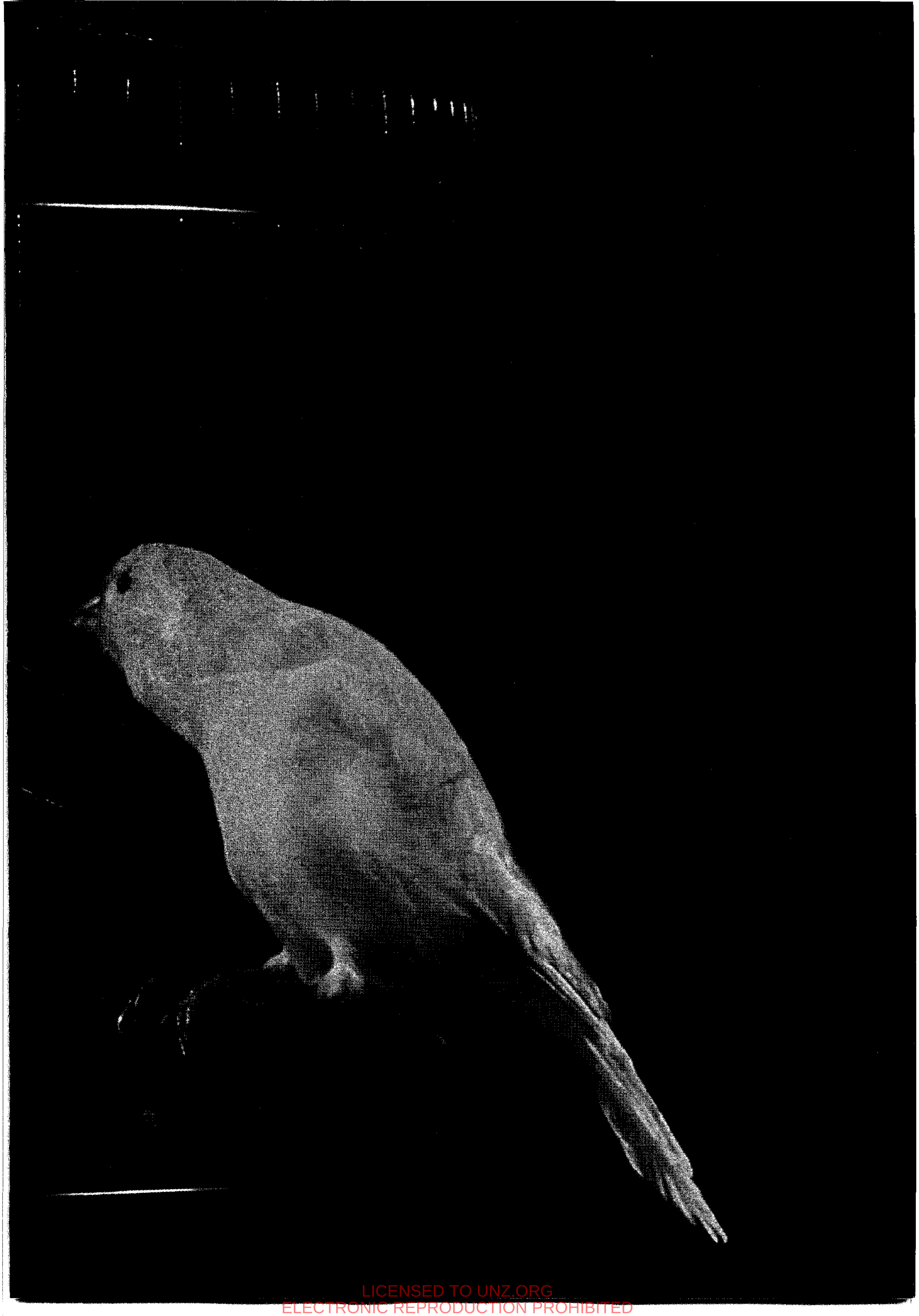
Dress to Kill—The British comic Eddie Izzard returns to town with a new show. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391. Closes May 3.)

The Emperor Jones—The Wooster Group's staging of O'Neill's early drama. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651. Closes April 26.)

A Flea in Her Ear—Bill Irwin's production of Georges Feydeau's 1907 farce can't live up to the fun of the script, which has been deftly and wittily co-adapted by Jean-Marie Besset and Mark O'Donnell. Part of the problem is the casting: the

ELIZA GRAN





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SONY

ensemble is quite young, and as a group the actors lack both the years and the swank necessary to carry off the vainglory for which the author punishes them. (3/23/98) (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 719-1300. Closes May 10.)

Freak—In his "pseudo-autobiographical" one-man show about growing up in New York, John Leguizamo takes the audience on a very funny breakneck jaunt down distorted-memory lane, beginning with the moment his parents conceived him, in Colombia. ("We left during that great plantain famine of the late sixties," he says.) He's a small guy, but his seemingly boneless body and boundless humor fill the large stage, and he absolutely charms, from start to finish. Directed by David Bar Katz. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Golden Child—A graceful, affecting production of David Henry Hwang's 1996 drama. Set in both present-day Manhattan and in China in 1918, the play traces the impact of Christianity and Western ideas on one Chinese family over several generations while also exploring themes of individuality, assimilation, and cultural evolution. Hwang treats it all with wit and humor, so the evening is never heavy-handed. The cast, under the direction of James Lapine, is quite good, and the sets and costumes are simple and lovely. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Hedwig and the Angry Inch—Hedwig, as written and portrayed by John Cameron Mitchell, is a sweet transsexual singer from East Berlin, whose cabaret performance cum stadium act becomes a smart, funny, and very moving exploration of the redemptive, if perhaps fleeting, power of love. (Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

The Herbal Bed—Shakespeare's daughter is accused of adultery, in a drama by Peter Whelan. Michael Attenborough is the director. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

I Am My Own Cheap Thrill—It's a man's world, and Amanda Vogel has something to say about it in her one-woman show. Thursdays through Saturdays at 10:30. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

Joseph Gabriel Magic '98—Mr. Gabriel comes to New York by way of Las Vegas. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

The Lion King—The director Julie Taymor's theatrical event is far more textured and original than the animated film; it's like being in a dream awake. The show's high visual style, however, is in sharp contrast to its low verbal one. (11/24/97) (New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

Long Day's Journey Into Night—An Irish Rep staging of O'Neill's drama. With Frances Sternhagen and Brian Murray. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes May 3.)

Marc Salem's Mindgames—The clairvoyant's fascinating "tricks" seem like magic, and at times you feel like you're the only person in the audience who isn't a plant. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

Miss Julie—Strindberg's tragedy is the Pearl Theatre Company's final production for the season. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

Mizlansky/Zilinsky; or, Schmucks—Davis Mizlansky, played with terrific gusto by Nathan Lane, is a has-been producer trying to float one last get-rich scheme with his urbane partner and erstwhile best friend, Sam Zilinsky (the droll Lewis J. Stadlen), whom he woos, hilariously, into the disastrous scam. Aided by Joe Mantello's elegant direction, the playwright Jon Robin Baitz creates a potent atmosphere of affection and regret which is the play's charm. (3/16/98) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes April 26.)

Never the Sinner—John Logan's 1985 play about Leopold and Loeb, the teen-age millionaires who murdered a child in Chicago in 1924, sweeps the audience into the boys' twisted friendship without losing sight of the sheer brutality of their "crime of the century"—a balancing act that Mr. Logan and the director, Ethan McSweeny, bring off seamlessly. Jason Patrick Bowcutt and Michael Solomon are utterly convincing as the killers. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

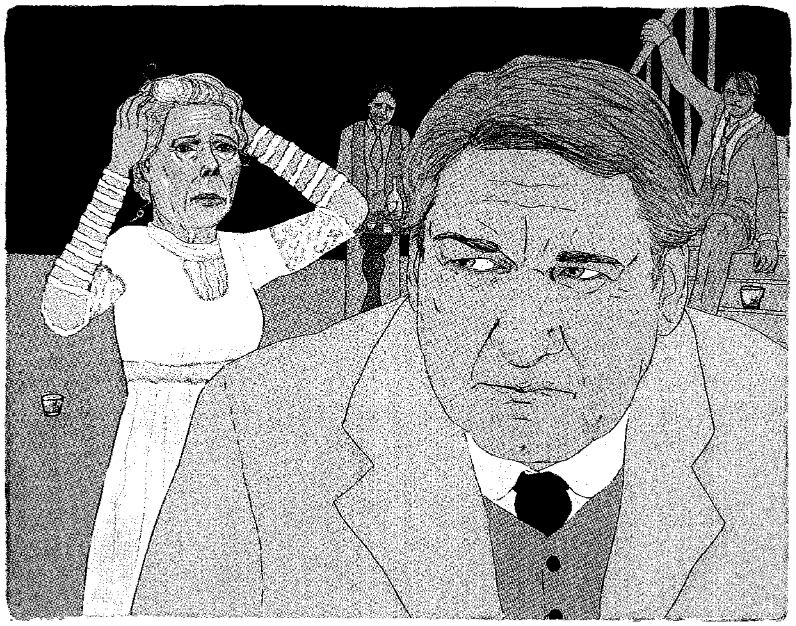
The Old Neighborhood—David Mamet's three elegant, autobiographical one-act plays are serious, beautiful, and short—an almost impossible feat these days on Broadway. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Pieces of the Sky—A Jewish mailman in Nebraska during the Second World War is held in contempt for his role as the bearer of bad news and for his religion, in a drama by David L. Patterson. (28th Street Theatre, 15 W. 28th St. 421-1380.)

Quidam—A new show from Cirque du Soleil. (The big top at Battery Park City. For more information, call 800-678-5440.)

Ragtime—E. L. Doctorow's epic novel is transformed into a historical pageant. It's a big, brave, passionate gamble, masterfully directed by Frank Galati. (2/2/98) (Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.)

R & J—A promising, if not exactly new, idea—schoolboys escape regimentation and discover their own passion by performing "Romeo and Juliet"—yields a few gripping moments surrounded by a lot of overheated panting, shouting, and foot-stomping. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 354-2220.)



Frances Sternhagen and Brian Murray, in "Long Day's Journey Into Night."

LARA TOMLIN

St. Nicholas—Brian Cox portrays a drama critic describing a breakdown of sorts, in Conor McPherson's cheeky 1997 play. Perhaps it's because of Cox's powerful performance that you don't quite notice how truly bizarre his story becomes—one minute he's a boozy, self-loathing hack who spends his evenings writing his reviews before the plays are over while lusting for beautiful actresses; the next, he's spending them shepherding attractive young victims to a grouchy vampire named William—and perhaps it's because the story is not really such a stretch. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes April 25.)

Saturn Returns: A Concert—Adam Guettel's dashing abilities as both composer and lyricist are sounded from the first beat of his song cycle, which offers a tempting glimpse of a major talent to look forward to. The evening, a kind of musical grab bag, is ostensibly based on Greek myths and Protestant hymns, but it is actually a scintillating piece of musical autobiography that explores Guettel's fractured sense of self. Astutely directed by Tina Landau. (4/13/98) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes April 26.)

Someone Who'll Watch Over Me—Frank McGuinness's drama, set in a prison cell during the Beirut hostage crisis of 1985. (Phil Bosakowski Theatre, 354 W. 45th St. 353-6163. Closes May 3.)

The Sound of Music—The Rodgers and Hammerstein favorite is back. Rebecca Luker is enormously winning as Maria, and the seven children in the cast are mostly delightful, but the production doesn't linger in the memory; there may be music in those hills, but the producers didn't seem to find a whole lot of fresh air up there. Susan H. Schulman is the director. (4/6/98) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Summer in Gossensass—Maria Irene Fornés's new drama, about two actresses responsible for the first London staging of Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler." (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes April 26.)

The Sunshine Boys—A revival of Neil Simon's comedy about two irascible old vaudevillians, starring Ye Olde Odd Couple of television, Tony Randall and Jack Klugman. The sandpapery friction that the twosome showed on TV is now reduced to lovability. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Two Pianos, Four Hands—With the keyboardists Andrew Lippa and Jed Rees. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

A View from the Bridge—The Roundabout Theatre's excellent revival of Arthur Miller's tragic story of the longshoreman Eddie Carbone and his obsession with his orphaned niece. (1/5/98) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

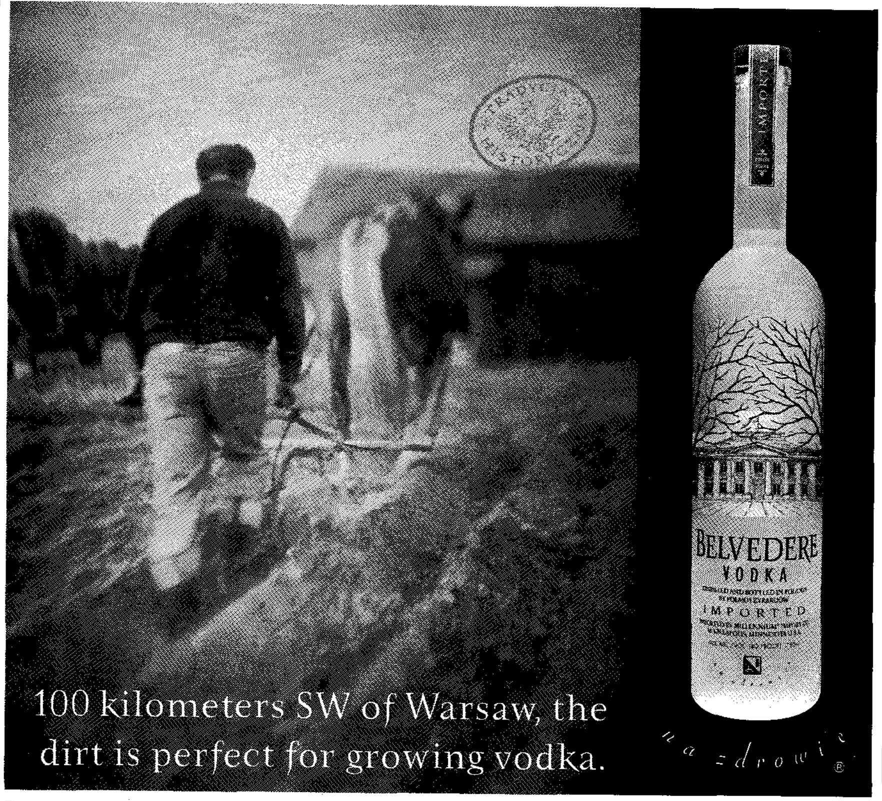
Visiting Mr. Green—Eli Wallach finds great dignity in the title character, an eighty-six-year-old Jewish widower, in Jeff Baron's sweet if predictable Upper West Side comedy. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-0700.)

Wait Until Dark—Marisa Tomei and Quentin Tarantino star in a revival of Frederick Knott's 1966 suspense drama. Leonard Foglia is the director. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

While You Were Out—A one-act comedy about the world of temps. (Access Theatre, 380 Broadway, at White St. 971-1026. Closes April 25.)

LONG RUNS

AS BEES IN HONEY DROWN: Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St.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DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET—April 28 at 8: "The Four Temperaments," "Afternoon of a Faun," "Antique Epigraphs," and "Symphony in C." . . . ¶ April 29 at 8: "Monumentum pro Gesualdo/Movements for Piano and Orchestra," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," "Stabat Mater," and "Symphony in C." . . . ¶ April 30 at 8: "Square Dance," "Stabat Mater," and "Bournonville Divertissements." . . . ¶ May 1 at 8: "Monumentum pro Gesualdo/Movements for Piano and Orchestra," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," "Opus 19/The Dreamer," and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." . . . ¶ May 2 at 2: "Monumentum pro Gesualdo/Movements for Piano and Orchestra," "Stabat Mater," "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." . . . ¶ May 2 at 8: "Square Dance," "Opus 19/The Dreamer," and "Symphony in C." . . . ¶ May 3 at 3: "The Four Temperaments," "Afternoon of a Faun," "Antique Epigraphs," and "Bournonville Divertissements." . . . ¶ May 5 at 8: "The Four Temperaments," "Ash," "Zakouski," and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through June 28.)

ELIOT FELD'S BALLET TECH—April 22 and April 25 at 8: "Doo Dah Day," "Echo," "Yo, Johann," and "Paper Tiger." . . . ¶ April 23 at 8: "Umbra Rumba," "The Last Sonata," "Yo, Shakespeare," and "Skara Brae." . . . ¶ April 24 at 8: "Simon Sez," "Charmed Lives," "Re: X," and "The Jig Is Up." . . . ¶ April 25 at 2 (a family matinée): "Sleep Study," "23 Skidoo," "Joggers," and "Meshugana Dance." . . . ¶ April 26 at 2 (a family matinée): "Hello Fancy," "Half Time," "Evening Chant," and "The Jig Is Up." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

LA TANIA—The flamenco dancer is joined by Andrés Marín and a quartet of singers and musicians in an evening of bolero-style works. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. April 28-May 1 at 8, May 2 at 2 and 8, and May 3 at 2 and 7:30.)

TERE O'CONNOR DANCE—The choreographer's marvellous trio of dancers (Chrysa Parkinson, Sarah Perron, and Greg Zuccolo) join forces with the equally versatile Marc Kenison and Heather Olson in "House" and "The World Is a Missing Girl." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-

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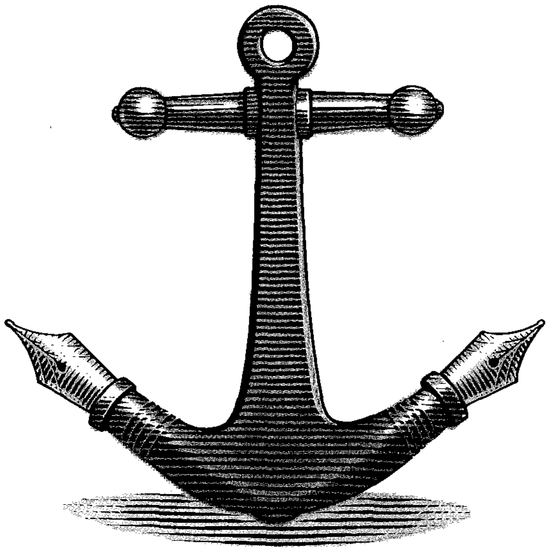
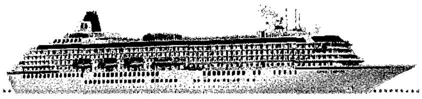


The New Yorker goes to sea.



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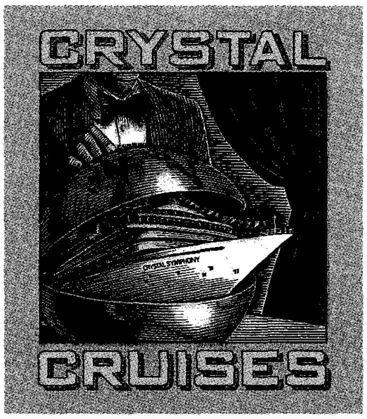

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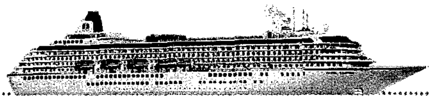

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City Ballet, in Jerome Robbins's "Antique Epigraphs."

JEAN-CLAUDE GOTTING

0077. April 23-25 and April 30-May 2 at 8 and April 26 and May 3 at 3.)

"Attractions Étranges"—The Paris-based Compagnie Cecile Proust presents an hour-long work that addresses issues pondered by the choreographer during a recent residency in Kyoto—for example, the point at which movement and stillness intersect. With a score by Tan Dun for water, stone, and voice. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. April 23-26 at 8:30.)

"Cocca Mocca"—In a new evening-length work, Douglas Dunn & Dancers recast themselves as a coöperative, wandering, semi-agrarian tribe—with backup music by Gamelan Son of Lion and others and costumes by Charles Atlas. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. April 30-May 3 at 8:30.)

"Piano Piano"—Danial Shapiro and Joanie Smith re-create the era of parlor mesmerists and Carnegie Hall mystics, to a soundscape that combines the sound of matches being lit with Chopin nocturnes and Beethoven sonatas. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. April 23 and April 26 at 8 and April 24-25 at 7 and 9.)

"Kriyas"—The former Stephen Petronio dancer Mia Lawrence performs a "solo dance"—with Gabriella Solini, who acts as a guide for the choreographer through seven scenes of a spiritual journey. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. April 24-26 and April 29-May 3 at 7:30.)

"Di-agnosis"—A split bill with Luis Lara and Jeremy Nelson. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. April 30-May 3 at 8:30.)

"These Women"—Amy Pivar presents a dance drama about a woman reviewing her own life after the death of a friend. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. April 29-May 2 at 8 and May 3 at 3. Through May 23.)

Kathakali Kalakeli Troupe—The famous temple dance of Kerala, with Chathanoor Kochunarayana Pillai Kesava Pillai portraying the black-faced evil gods and Radhakrishna Kurup Chellapan Nair as the divine females. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. April 24 at 8.)

"Romeo and Juliet"—Dances Patrelle marks its tenth anniversary with a revival of Francis Patrelle's version of the ballet, set to the original Prokofiev score. With Jennifer Ringer and James Fayette, from New York City Ballet. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. April 23 at 7:30, April 24 at 8, April 25 at 2 and 8, and April 26 at 2.)

"Elegant Strain"—A trio for the choreographer Andrea Mills, with Kerrigan Kessler and Eva Lawrence. Mills's solo "Hue" is also on the program. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. April 30-May 3 at 8.)

"From the Horse's Mouth"—A rotating slate of dance veterans, including Linda Tarnay, Carmen deLavallade, Sally Silvers, Viola Farber, and Stuart Hodes, talk about their careers and collaborate on an improvised piece. Using the same title, event organizers Tina Croll and James Cunningham present a suite of solos and duets. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 334-7479. April 22-26 at 8.)

Peter Pucci Plus Dancers—The company premières "Basketball Jones," a ballet that includes layups, sneaker squeaks, and ball-handling maneuvers in its choreography. With "Rapt," "Ayego," and "Hoop-La." (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. May 1 at 7 and May 2-3 at noon and 5.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Paula Cole—Though she lacks the piano-wire precision of, say, Tori Amos (see Irving Plaza) or the loony languor of Fiona Apple (Cole's singing too often suffers from a stiff, music-school perfectionism), she's still a gifted songwriter and a genuine new star. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. April 23 at 8.)

"Speak No Evil: The Music of Wayne Shorter"—In terms of contemporary influence on the neo-traditional jazz generation, Shorter's in the same league as Miles Davis and John Coltrane; his tenor and soprano saxophone stylings and modal-bop compositions from the sixties (from stints with Art Blakey's and Davis's bands) still provide blueprints for the post-Marsalis brood. Shorter remains a master player—incisive, poignant, elliptical—and few saxophonists have not been touched by his lyrical, languid approach. A Jazz at Lincoln Center production. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. April 23 and April 25 at 8.)

Phillip Johnston's Transparent Quartet—This unit may not be as boisterous as Johnston's late lamented Microscopic Septet, but his distinctive writing and exacting soprano-saxophone work still thrive in it. (Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. 708-9491. April 24 at 5:30.)

Jonatha Brooke—A singer-songwriter whose breezy wit falls somewhere between Suzanne Vega's and Christine Lavin's. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. April 24 at 8.)

"Folkways at 50"—Celebrating the great American folk and esoterica label and its late founder, Moses Asch. With Pete Seeger, Lucinda Williams, the New Lost City Ramblers with Ralph Stanley, and Toshi and Bernice Johnson Reagon. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. May 1 at 8.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—April 22: Jazz, Latin, and Middle Eastern strains come together in bassist **avishai cohen's** ensemble, which finds room for trombone, soprano saxophone, occasional oud interjec-

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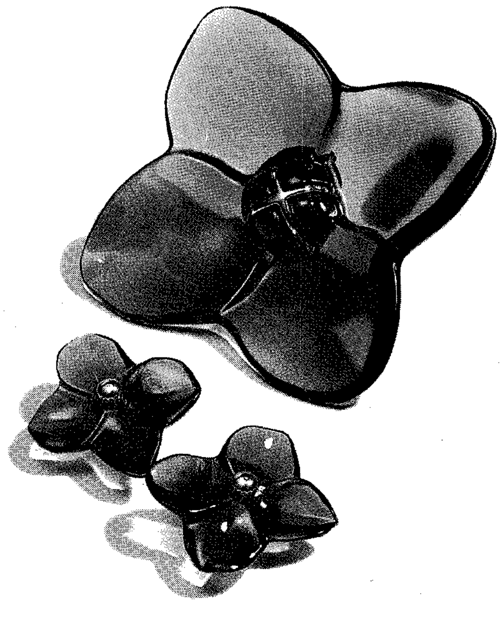

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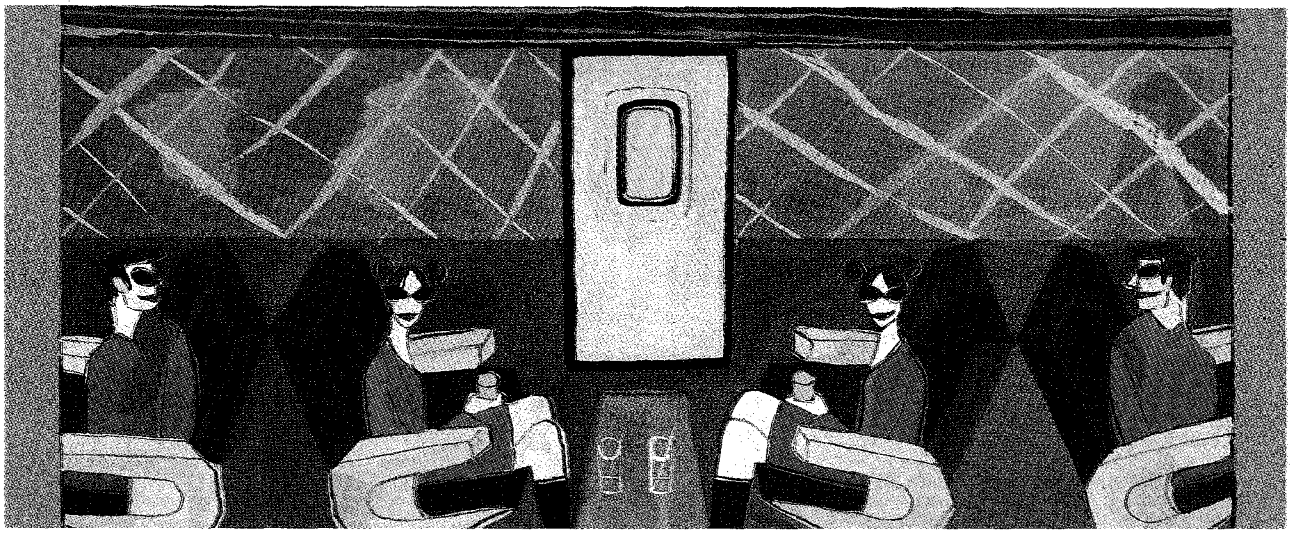
tions, and the leaders's own buoyant playing. April 23-25: Flutist **ELISE WOODS** brings out the romanticist in pianist **JOHN HICKS** in a part-time partnership now well into its second decade. April 29-May 1: **THE JAZZ MESSENGERS: THE LEGACY OF ART BLAKEY.** For close to half a century, the drummer Art Blakey used his band, the Jazz Messengers, to whip young talent into shape and then send it out into the world. While the taskmaster received a steady recharge from this influx, his acolytes picked up training that has seen more than a few of them through long careers. The current sextet brings two legendary vets, saxophonist Benny Golson and trombonist Curtis Fuller, together with the pianist Mulgrew Miller, trumpeter Terence Blanchard, and bassist Peter Washington. The superb drummer Lewis Nash attempts to fill the master's shoes. May 2: Look, Ma, four hands! **STANLEY JORDAN'S** ability to wrest symphonic landscapes from his guitar continues to astound. Dining.



Fasten your seat belts and raise your trays to the upright and locked position: preparing for takeoff at Idlewild.

MARINA SAGONA

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through April 26: Vocalist **BETTY CARTER** and her trio. April 27: **JUNKO ONISHI,** the best female Japanese bop pianist since Toshiko Akiyoshi. April 28-May 3: **JOHNNY GRIFFIN'S 70TH-BIRTHDAY BASH** and the **JACKIE MCLEAN QUINTET.** You can practically feel the collective shiver running down the backs of New York bop saxophonists when the master, Johnny Griffin, makes his annual visit from overseas./After decades in the fray, alto saxophonist McLean is practically a compendium of modern jazz; he makes the distinctions between bop, hard bop, and modal playing disappear. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—**BARBARA COOK** continues through May 2. **BOBBY SHORT** begins a two-month stay on May 5. . . . ¶Across the hall, pianist **PETER MINTUN** is in charge at Bemelmans Bar through May 2. Starting May 5: **BARBARA CARROLL.**

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—A big man with lungs to match, **KEVIN MAHOGANY** (through April 26) shouts blues, croons ballads, scats bebop, and does everything else a jazz singer has to do to qualify as well rounded in the late twentieth century. April 28-May 3: With his talent for titanic eruptions now tempered by an equal flair for emotive ballads, **PHAROAH SANDERS** has become the complete saxophonist. Mondays belong to electricguitar innovator **LES PAUL.** Dining.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—In the Old Office, April 22-26: It will take most of a week to accommodate all the projects that pianist **ANTHONY COLEMAN** has kept up in the air for the past decade. Each night will have its warped delights, but his Sephardic Tinge trio (April 24), with the indispensable team of drummer Joey Baron and bassist Greg Cohen, brings to mind a bar mitzvah with Duke Ellington and Thelonious Monk taking turns at the piano. April 26: **DAVID KRAKAUER'S KLEZMER MADNESS.** The virtuoso clarinettist Krakauer can play it straight or play it twisted; either way, his exceptional command and his clever klezmer subversion are worth checking out. April 27-29: John Zorn's **MASADA,** the freshest and most openly emotive jazz ensemble playing today.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through April 26: **SONNY FORTUNE,** a fifty-nine-year-old quadruple threat who has mastered the tenor, alto, and soprano saxophones as well as the flute. April 28-May 3: By taking on the tenor and soprano saxophones just like his father, John, **RAVI COLTRANE** hasn't made it easy for himself. But he's made it through his apprenticeship years with distinction and individuality; his new, eponymous début recording reveals the winning combination of a full-throated horn sound and a ruminating demeanor. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Drummer **LEON PARKER** is in through April 26. From his pared-down kit to his anything-goes take on jazz, Parker is an original—all rhythm and pure pleasure. April 28-May 3: "Celebrating Duke Ellington," with **HAROLD ASHBY.** Ashby has been carrying on the tradition of the big-toned, heart-on-the-sleeve tenor-sax man ever since Duke Ellington hired him as a resident romantic in the mid-sixties. His forthright swing can surely cure what ails you. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

ROCK, ETC.

Acme Underground, 9 Great Jones St. (677-6963)—April 29: The **LILYS,** perhaps America's best-kept pop secret. April 30-May 2: **ALEX CHILTON,** the man from Memphis who (as a high-school sophomore) put the gravel into the Box Tops' classic, "The Letter." Over the past three decades, he's been the leader of Big Star, producer for the Cramps, a dishwasher, and the subject of a Replacements song; these days, he seems content to cut records that showcase his sardonic approach to blues, rockabilly, country, and R. & B.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—April 25: **ANNIE HASLAM,** the former lead singer of the seminal English art-rock band Renaissance. May 1: **ROGER HODGSON,** better known as the tenor for the fey seventies mega-act Supertramp. May 2: Left-of-center mirth from the **KLEZMATICS,** a band that has the musicianship to back up its attitude, which is half downtown, half shtetl. May 4: The **CALL,** a great, often forgotten eighties progressive-rock band.

El Flamingo, 547 W. 21st St. (243-2121)—May 1: **MORCHEEBA.** The name nicely captures the psychotropic spell that this Brit collective casts over a room. The band's munchies-inducing groove is well seasoned with sexy vocals from singer Skye Edwards.

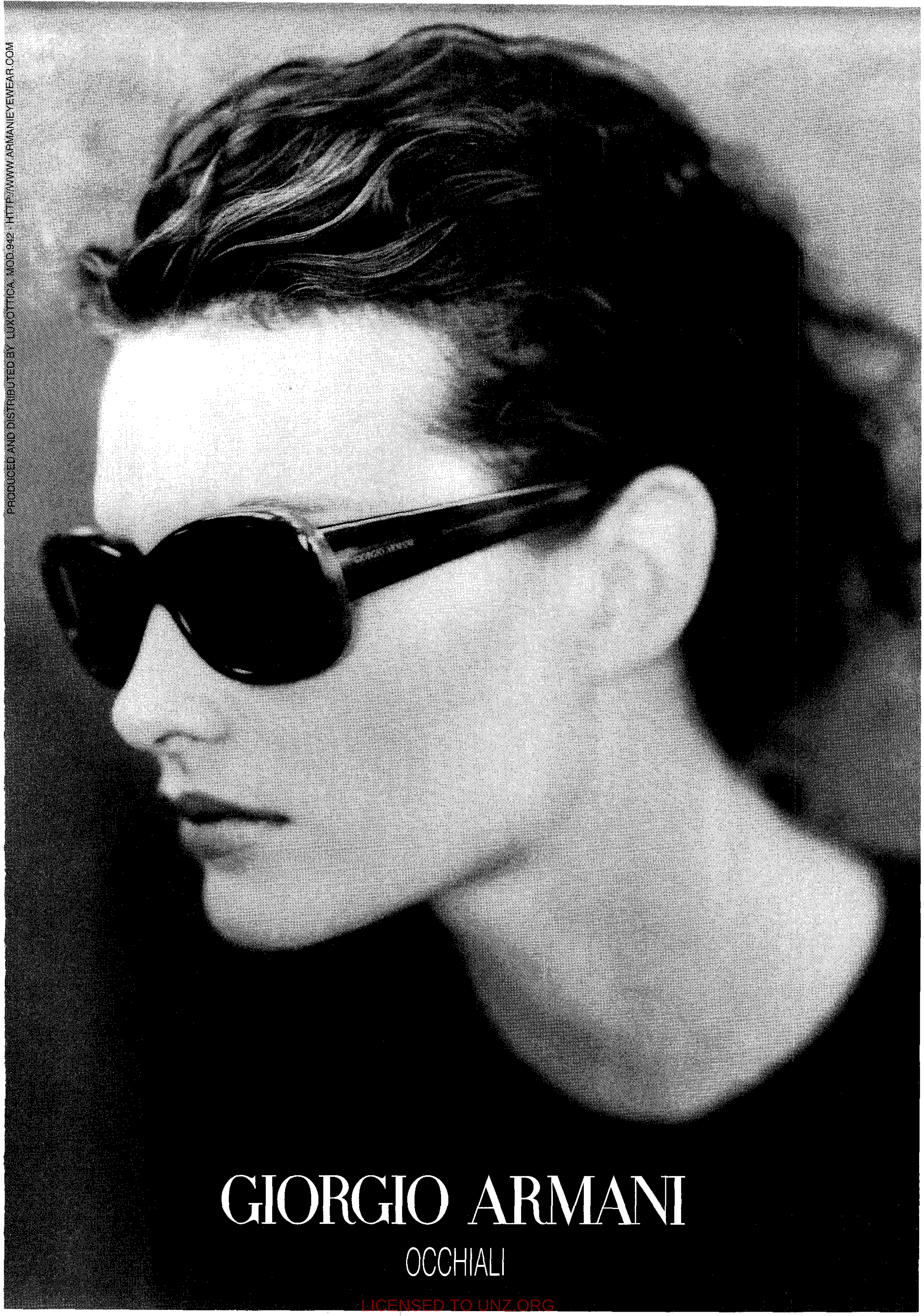
Idlewild, 145 E. Houston St. (477-5005)—You can commiserate about the airline industry's war on budget travellers while enjoying plenty of legroom at this new, sleek ode to the golden age of jet travel. A bright white fibreglass boarding ramp leads you up to an airplane interior where topflight d.j.s take the place of tinny plastic headphones and sexy stewardess uniforms are back in fashion. The details—real coach seats converted into booths, turbulence-proof cocktail glasses—stop short of being too cute, and the mix of passengers is appealingly international.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—April 23: **TORI AMOS.** Having established a surprisingly rabid following (which will probably insure that her new album, "From the Choirgirl Hotel," débuts at No. 1), the "cornflake girl" warms up here for a series of high-profile summer dates. April 24: Local favorites the **BOGMEN** play dark, guitar-driven alt-pop. April 27: The beloved Georgia folk duo **INDIGO GIRLS.** April 29: Like his countryman Youssou N'Dour, the Senegalese singer **BAABA MAAL** offers soaring melodies and churning percussion, and his lyrics dabble in mystical imagery. May 2: Eighties-era synth-pop pioneer **GARY NUMAN.** May 5: **DAVID BYRNE.** On last year's "Feelings," the former Talking Heads front man added some frenetic dance beats to his usual fiesta of bumptious pan-American grooves. It's fun music, and Byrne's concerts can get your booty moving. With **KING CHANGO.**

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—May 2: A rare stateside appearance by the **BEVIS FROND,** the gnomish alter ego of Londoner Nick Salomon, who rode to cult glory in the late eighties on a wave of obscure, acclaimed records full of songs with titles like "Medieval Siennese Acid Blues" and "Stoned Train Driver."

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—April 22: **ELLIOTT SMITH,** the Oscar-nominated (for his lachrymose noodling on the "Good Will Hunting" soundtrack) former indie hero, strums his guitar. April 24: Blues-guitar god **JOHN HAMMOND.** April 30: **ROBIN TROWER,** another legendary blues guitarist, lights up the stage. May 1: **JASON AND THE SCORCHERS** pay homage to the spirit in the sky. May 2: The **JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION.** This savage New York trio devotes a great deal of time and energy to the enduring mysteries of the blues, injecting the idiom with ragged nineties-style references: tin-can drums, a string section, and, here and there, a blast of head-butting distortion.

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—April 26: The staccato, tremolo-ridden guitar of **DICK DALE.** Surf's up.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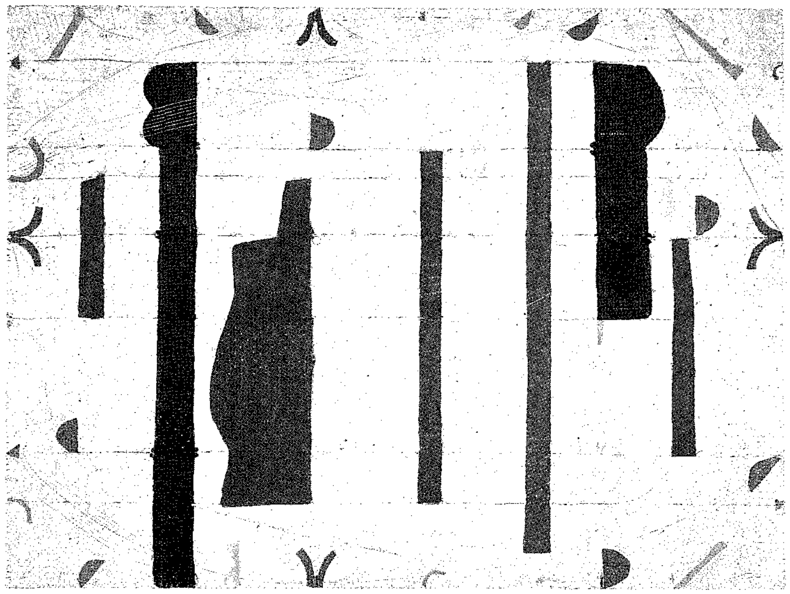
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"American Ingenuity," at the Costume Institute, pays tribute to the pioneer women of sportswear—Claire McCardell, Bonnie Cashin, Anne Klein, Vera Maxwell, and Elizabeth Hawes—who gave American ingénues their look of dressy nonchalance. Through Aug. 16. . . . ¶ "Augustin Pajou, Royal Sculptor." Through May 24. . . . ¶ "Pierre-Paul Prud'hon (1758-1823)." Through June 7. . . . ¶ "When Silk Was Gold: Central Asian and Chinese Textiles in the Metropolitan and Cleveland Museums of Art." Through May 17. . . . ¶ "Paul Strand Circa 1916." Through May 31. . . . ¶ "The Nature of Islamic Ornament, Part One: Calligraphy." Through June 28. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—The Chuck Close retrospective and "Artists and Subjects: Picasso to Stella" examine the guises of twentieth-century portraiture. Through May 26 and May 25, respectively. . . . ¶ "Alvar Aalto: Between Humanism and Materialism," a centennial exhibition that includes sketches, photographs, and maquettes of architectural projects by the Finnish modernist. Through May 19. . . . ¶ A retrospective of the works of Fernand Léger follows the metamorphoses of the French painter (1881-1955), from Fauvist to Cubist to Social Realist. Through May 12. . . . ¶ "The Clutter of Happenstance: Photographs by Robert Cumming." Through June 23. . . . ¶ Twenty-six recently acquired photographs by Garry Winogrand are on view. Through May 31. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 6; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:30.)



"Pietrasanta Painting C97.52," by Caio Fonseca (Knoedler).

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"China: 5,000 Years" is an impressive survey of art in nearly every medium; it includes some of the country's greatest masterpieces. The exhibition ranges from the Neolithic to the dynastic era and has no particular focus; with works of this quality, however, no one's complaining. Through June 3. . . . ¶ "After 'Mountains and Sea': Frankenthaler 1956-59." Through May 3. . . . ¶ "Visions of Paris: Robert Delaunay's Series." Through May 24. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"A Century in Crisis" comprises the contemporary portion of the institution's blockbuster exhibition "China: 5,000 Years." Through May 25. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—The current Bill Viola retrospective is quite a feat of installation, incorporating sound and image in complex, quasi-sculptural settings. Through May 10. . . . ¶ The face-lift for the museum's permanent collection galleries is now complete, with the expanded quarters serving as the new home for key works by Hopper, O'Keeffe, and Calder. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Jewels of the Romanovs: Treasures of the Russian Imperial Court" presents crown jewels and other baubles, including the most famous sapphire in the world (before Kate Winslet's), a 260-carat specimen given by Alexander II to his wife. Through July 5. . . . ¶ "Mexican Prints from the Collection of Reba and Dave Williams" includes examples from Kahlo, Orozco, Rivera, Siqueiros, and Tamayo. Through Aug. 10. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays, 11 to 9; and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (423-3200)—"An Expressionist in Paris: The Paintings of Chaim Soutine," the first New York exhibition devoted to the feverish Lithuanian since 1950. Through Aug. 16. . . . ¶ "Still More Distant Journeys: The Artistic Emigrations of Lasar Segall (1891-1957)" is the first United States retrospective of the German Expressionist and Brazilian modernist, whose evolving styles kept pace with his migrations from Vilnius, Berlin, and Dresden to, finally, São Paulo. Through May 10. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Museum of American Folk Art, Columbus Ave. at 65th St. (977-7170)—"Self-Taught Artists of the Twentieth Century: Perspectives on Patterning" gathers five homebody artists, including the acknowledged masters Morris Hirshfield and Martin Ramirez as well as the more obscure Eugene Von Bruenchenhein. Through June 7. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11:30 to 7:30.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—"A War in Perspective, 1898-1998: Public Appeals, Memory, and the Spanish-American Conflict" examines the clashing ideologies and the divergent aftermaths for two world powers. Salomon Room; through Aug. 29. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Gabrielle Bakker—This San Francisco-based painter poses contemporary-looking women with flowing hair and pouting lips as Greek goddesses and mythological damsels, freely borrowing from the Renaissance masters. Hera, on a throne, has the pearlescent, greenish flesh of an angel by Piero della Francesca. There are some attempts at psychology, particularly in a series of paintings of big black minotaurs ravishing pallid nymphs, but they don't feel thought through. These are handsome paintings, but by invoking the great masters Bakker only whets the appetite for the real thing. Through May 5. (McGrath, 20 W. 57th St. 956-3366.)

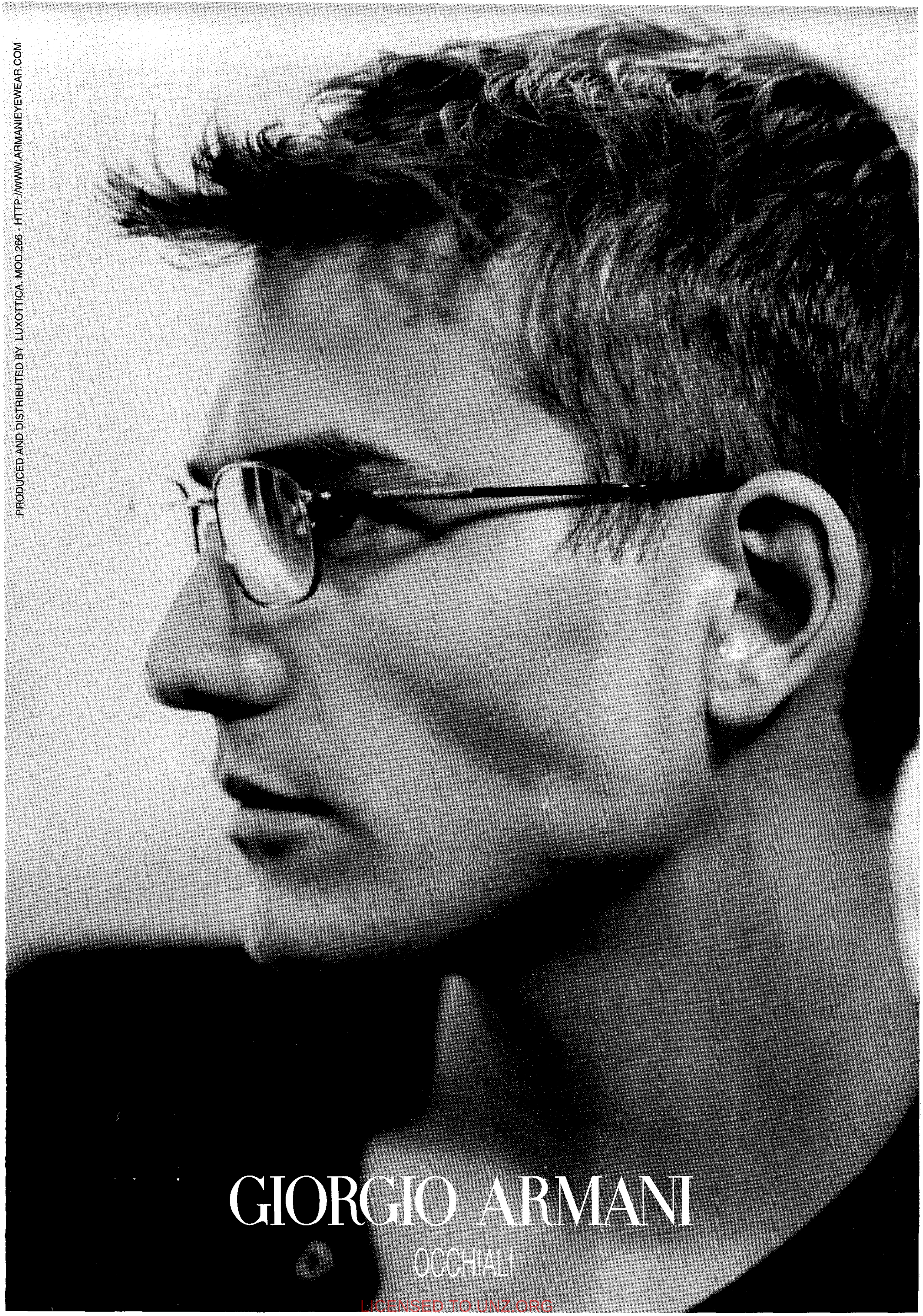
William Beckman and **Kent Bellows**—Two highly accomplished draftsmen with different approaches to the figure. Beckman's charcoal drawings, self-portraits, and double portraits possess palpable graphic power and psychological insight. Bellows's figure drawings in graphite are wrought with an astonishingly fine technique. In a portrait of a young man, the shadows on the cracked plaster wall behind the subject are rendered with the same precision as the smoothly modelled skin and individual hairs and whiskers. Dry and academic, but Bellows's bravura display of skill is mighty impressive. Through May 9. (Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 355-4545.)

Katherine Bowling—Vividly, even luridly colored landscape paintings of birches in autumn, daffodils in spring—things of that sort—rendered in a blurry style that suggests motion, as though the artist were running through the woods. Bowling seems to be attempting to gussy up her banal subject matter with a little modernist gloss, but she doesn't succeed. Through May 2. (Helman, 20 W. 57th St. 245-2888.)

Caio Fonseca—Attractive and uncomplicated abstract paintings by an artist who splits his time between the East Village and the Tuscan village of Pietrasanta. Fonseca orchestrates his forceful colors and sweeping compositions with an almost Balanchinean directness: he choreographs the forms and fluid lines in such a way that the viewer sees music. Through May 2. (Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550.)

Eva Hesse (1936-70) / **"Tension"**—Thirteen deeply absorbing abstractions in gouache—some black and white, others flame orange, with dark forms dripping down and drooping around—from the early sixties, a few years before the artist turned to sculpture. The formal and emotional concerns expressed here certainly found their way into Hesse's three-dimensional works, but these enigmatic drawings have a gloomy magic all their own./Despite the portentous title, a themeless grab bag mixing some fine work by David Hockney, Lee Krasner, and Alex Katz with that of younger gallery artists. Two dark, early portraits by Alice Neel are truly arresting. Both shows through May 2. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454.)

Jack Levine/Isabel Bishop (1902-88)—Oil paintings and prints made between 1960 and 1975 on social themes, rendered in the artist's mature style of blurry distortion and sparkling highlights. Some are straightforward reportage: "Birmingham '63" shows white policemen unleashing attack dogs on black freedom marchers. The savagely satirical "Military Symphony" is a group portrait of arrogant generals from Imperial Rome to the Napoleonic era, who look as though they're about to take the viewer prisoner; painted in 1966, the subject is obviously the Vietnam War. The exhibit also includes some lighthearted scenes of New York night life, such as one self-portrait set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OCCHIALI

at a Westchester cocktail party./ Ink figure sketches, carefully observed and skillfully executed, yet a bit wispy. Both shows through May 2. (DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111.)

Short List—**JAMES BARSNESS,** Adams, 41 W. 57th St. 644-5665. Through May 9. . . . **ALICE DALTON BROWN,** Fischbach, 24 W. 57th St. 759-2345. Through April 25. . . . **FRITZ BULTMAN,** Schlesinger, 24 E. 73rd St. 734-3600. Opens Saturdays at noon; through April 30. . . . **SAM CADY,** Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 397-0669. Through May 22. . . . **JANE FREILICHER,** DeNagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050. Through May 29. . . . **STEPHEN HANNOCK,** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 535-5767. Through May 9. . . . **LUIS JIMENEZ,** ACA, 41 E. 57th St. 644-8300. Through April 25. . . . **KURT KREN,** Gat, 1100 Madison Ave., at 82nd St. 327-0441. Through May 31. . . . **VINCENT LA SCALA,** Baumgold, 128 E. 72nd St. 861-7338. Through May 9. . . . **ALBERT MARQUET,** Wildenstein, 19 E. 64th St. 879-0500. Through May 23. . . . **AGNES MARTIN,** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292. Through April 25. . . . **FÉLICIEN ROPS,** Shepherd, 21 E. 84th St. 861-4050. Through April 25. . . . **ALBERT YORK,** Davis & Langdale, 231 E. 60th St. 838-0333. Through June 12.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

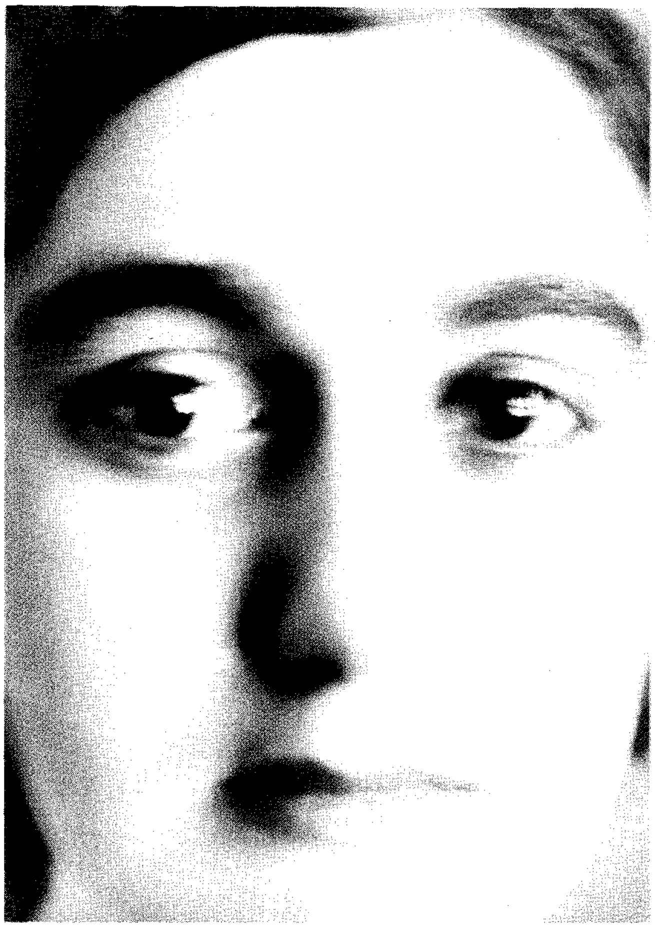
Gregory Green—Mixed-medium works having to do with various types of nefarious crimes and conspiracies. Since the mid-eighties, Green has been creating book bombs, mail bombs, and suitcase bombs, all of which lack only the proper explosive materials to set them off. He has also created installations that function as pirate radio stations, and here he offers computer disks containing destructive viruses as well as a recipe for homemade LSD. This is disturbing (yet also very witty) stuff, and it speaks to our own creepy historical moment. Through April 25. (Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500.)

Mary Heilmann—The artist began her career as a potter, and some of the effects of glazing still give a certain sloppy sheen to her largely geometric paintings. Such modulations in her work are so incremental that they don't seem to matter, especially in the face of so much resplendent beauty. A superb and pretty show. Through April 25. (Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. 727-7366.)

Elke Krystufek—"Animal Nightlife: Nothing but Fun," a group of paintings and photographs by a young Austrian artist. Rendered in the currently fashionable style of artily drippy illustration, the paintings demonstrate the artist's affection for Edie Sedgwick. Through May 6. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121.)

Michael Kvium—An intriguing show of oil paintings by a Danish artist. The pictures feature mutant homunculi engaged in a variety of unsavory activities. Kvium's works are very much in the Nordic tradition of gloom and despair; that is their strength. Through May 9. (DCA Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-5511.)

Robert Overby (1935-93)—"The Barclay House," five latex casts of architectural elements from an abandoned, burned-out wreck of a domicile. The artist made twenty-seven casts in a single day in 1971. Very much in the tradition of post-Minimalism (early works of Bruce Nauman and Richard Serra come to mind), Overby's art has only in recent years gained the critical attention it deserves. Through May 2. (Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555.)



"Anna Oderfeld," by Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz (Robert Miller).

Short List—**GHADA AMER,** Nosei, 530 W. 22nd St. 741-8695. Through May 20. . . . **SIAH ARMAJANI,** Protetch, 511 W. 22nd St. 633-6999. Through May 13. . . . **LIESBETH BIK AND JOS VAN DER POL,** Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770. Through June 30. . . . **CHUCK BOWDISH,** AAA Gallery, 111 W. 17th St. 229-9109. Open Thursdays through Sundays, 1 to 6; through May 3. . . . **BETTY GOODWIN,** Shainman, 513 W. 20th St. 645-1701. Through May 16. . . . **ANISH KAPOOR,** Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 206-9300. Through May 22. . . . **WIN KNOWLTON,** Maynes, 529 W. 20th St. 741-3318. Through May 9. . . . **REE MORTON,** Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 367-7474. Through June 6. . . . **ROBERT MOTHERWELL,** Kempner, 501 W. 23rd St. 206-6872. Through May 3. . . . **ALICE NEEL,** Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727. Through April 25. . . . **CHARLES OLSON,** Bibro, 529 W. 20th St. 647-7030. Through May 23. . . . **JAMES SADEK,** Kravets/Wehby, 529 W. 21st St. 352-2238. Through May 2. . . . **BUZZ SPECTOR,** Cristinerose, 529 W. 20th St. 206-0297. Through May 9. . . . **MARY WEATHERFORD,** Debs, 529 W. 20th St. 647-7080. Through April 29. . . . **CHRIS WILDER,** Kreps, 529 W. 20th St. 741-8849. Through May 9.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Pier Consagra—Drawings, paintings, and ceramics by the Roman expatriate. In these various media, the artist neatly blends baroque and cartoon sensibilities. The ceramics look like dwarf Berninis dressed by Alexander McQueen. Through April 25. (Holly Solomon, 172 Mercer St. 941-5777.)

Walton Ford—Large watercolors of animals (an Indo-Chinese tiger, a colony of auks) which evoke Audubon, Brueghel, and the Hudson River School, period styles that serve as playing fields for historical ironies: the tiger's stripes hide profiles of Vietnamese rulers, and quotations from Casanova, de Sade, and other Enlightenment figures surround the birds—a reference to the era's luxurious auk-feather beds. Through May 23. (Kasmin, 74 Grand St. 219-3219.)

Julia Scher—"Wonderland," an impressive installation of a futuristic children's playroom reimagined as an Orwellian nightmare. A child-size musical keyboard produces unsettling noises while a psychedelic light show plays around the gallery, bouncing off funhouse mirrors and posters of children dressed as security guards in pink uniforms. Through April 25. (Rosen, 130 Prince St. 941-0203.)

Short List—**JASON DODGE,** Kaplan, 48 Greene St. 226-6131. Through May 23. . . . **GARTH EVANS,** Studio School, 8 W. 8th St. 673-6466. Through May 16. . . . **HELMUT FEDERLE,** Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441. Through May 30. . . . **ELIZABETH HILL,** A.I.R., 40 Wooster St. 966-0799. Through May 9. . . . **VICTOR HUGO,** The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. 219-2166. Through June 13. . . . **LANI IRWIN,** Perlow, 560 Broadway. 941-1220. Through May 5. . . . **ZBIGNIEW LIBERA,** McIntyre, 45 Crosby St. 334-9666. Through May 12. . . . **YONG SOON MIN,** Art in General, 79 Walker St. 219-0473. Through June 27. . . . **CATHERINE MURPHY,** Lennon, Weinberg, 560 Broadway. 941-0012. Through May 22. . . . **SHEILA PEPE,** Inglett, 100 Wooster St. 343-0573. Through May 9. . . . **DAVID SCHER,** Tilton, 49 Greene St. 941-1775. Through May 16. . . . **DAVID SMITH,** Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. 228-2828. Through May 23. . . . **SHAWN SPENCER,** Thorp, 103 Prince St. 431-6880. Through May 2. . . . **FRED STONEHOUSE,** M-13 Gallery, 72 Greene St. 925-3007. Through May 2. . . . **BRADLEY SUNNARBORG,** Art et Industrie, 52 Thompson St. 966-6800. Through May 16. . . . **ANDY WARHOL,** Brooke Alexander, 59 Wooster St. 925-4338. Through June 13.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

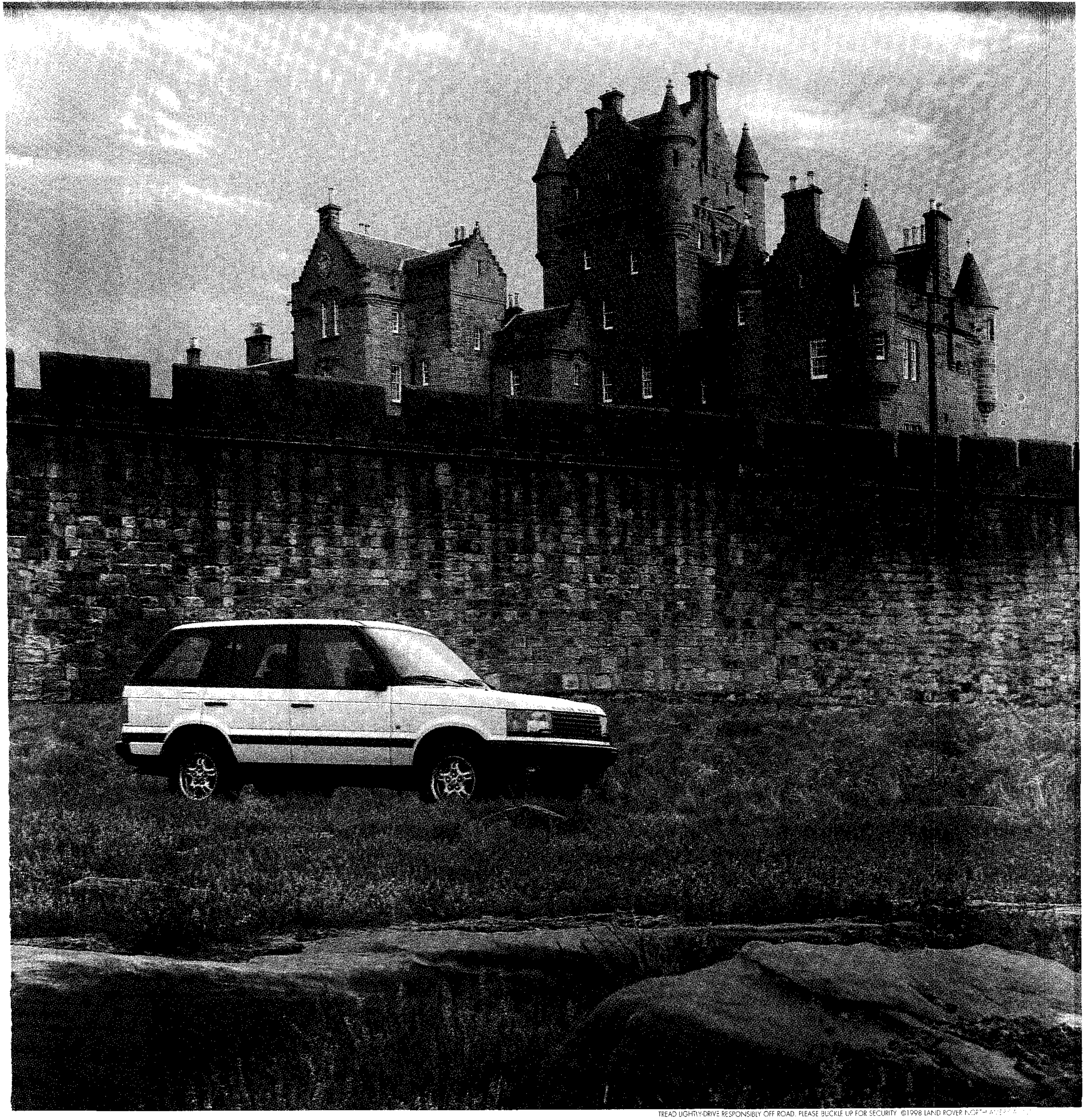
Christie's—April 22: Japanese modern and contemporary prints. . . . ¶ April 23: Porcelain. . . . ¶ April 27: Mostly twentieth-century prints, with a few earlier items (including an impressive Gauguin monotype from 1894). . . . ¶ May 5-6: Paintings from the Barbizon and other nineteenth-century schools, as well as works by the Impressionist masters, including Renoir's "Jeune Fille au Bouquet de Tulipes." (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.)

Sotheby's—April 22: A sale of thirty-three lots of silver pieces by the eighteenth-century silversmith Paul de Lamerie, from the collection of Jaime Ortiz-Patiño. . . . ¶ April 23: American paintings. . . . ¶ April 25: The third and final installment of the Ortiz-Patiño collection, this one involving French furniture and decorative art. . . . ¶ April 29: Paperweights and nineteenth-century furniture. . . . ¶ April 30-May 1: Prints by Picasso, Munch, Toulouse-Lautrec, and many others. . . . ¶ May 2: Contemporary prints, including notable impressions by Diebenkorn and Hockney. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

Doyle—April 22: American furniture and decorative art. . . . ¶ April 23: Estate jewelry. . . . ¶ April 28: For those holding invitations to May and June weddings, a timely auction of potential wedding gifts: china, glassware, silver, linens, and so on. . . . ¶ April 29: Prints and posters. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.)

Phillips—Couture, designer costumes, and accessories. (406 E. 79th St. 570-4830. May 5.)

Wendy Armory Show—A wide-ranging show of European, American, and Asian goods. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. April 29-May 3. For information, call 472-1180.)



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PHOTOGRAPHY

Leendert Blok (1895-1986)—This Dutch photographer spent much of his career documenting varieties of tulips and other flowers for cultivators in Haarlem. Blok was a pioneer in the use of the early autochrome method of color photography, and the works here—two dozen new cibachromes of the original glass plates from the mid-twenties—show him to have been a subtle modernist with a weakness for decadence. In two views, nearly jet-black bulbs on lithe stems appear in gangs of four, ready for a late night; in another image, a vermillion Samoa varietal casually flips a petal to one side. The most effete of these atmospheric portraits look as if they could have been made in one of Gatsby's drawing rooms. Through April 25. (Schoormans, 12 E. 2nd St. 477-6953. Opens at noon.)

Charles Hagen—Sharp color prints of the artist's daughter in various locales that, at least from the child's point of view, come to be extensions of the home: a Brooklyn Chinese restaurant, the back seat of a Volvo (a temporary bed), seaweed beds on the Maine coast. The sensual details—the cold, clammy seaweed, a cool early evening in the driveway—couldn't be more immediate. Through April 26. (Morthland, 225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767. Open Sundays, noon to 5.)

Simpson Kalisher—"Railroad Men," a strong show of vintage prints from the fifties. In quiet, unself-conscious black-and-white pictures, Kalisher captured the pride and the burdens of the trainmasters, the boomer switchmen, and the rest of that dying breed. Through April 25. (De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.)

Ralph Eugene Meatyard (1925-72)—"Master Prints," a retrospective of the lyrical and mysterious work of this optician and autodidact. Through April 25. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)

Inge Morath—A large retrospective in celebration of the artist's seventy-fifth birthday. Through May 2. (Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon.)

Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885-1939)—The first major show in the United States of the work of this Polish artist includes more than eighty photographs. Through May 2. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. 980-5454.)

International Center of Photography—"Micha Bar-Am: An Israeli Photobiography." Through May 31. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown—"Robert Capa: Photographs," a retrospective of the war correspondent's career. Through June 7. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Group Show—Early works by Peter Hujar, Joel Meyerowitz, and Milton Greene. Through May 9. (Danziger, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 734-5300.)

Short List—**TINA BARNEY**, Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166. Through May 16. . . . **UTA BARTH**, Bonakdar Jancou, 521 W. 21st St. 925-8035. Through April 23. . . . **ED BURTYNSKY** and **LOIS CONNER**, Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220. Both shows through May 30. . . . **SALLY GALL**, Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747. Through May 22. . . . **O. WINSTON LINK**, Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223. Through May 2. . . . **AUGUST SANDER**, Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727. Through April 25. . . . **BASTIENNE SCHMIDT**, Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. 223-1059. Through June 6. . . . **CINDY SHERMAN**, Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100. Through May 16. . . . **ED VAN DER ELSKEN**, Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through April 25. . . . **WILLIAM WEGMAN**, Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Through April 25. . . . **MARION POST WOLCOTT** and **SEBASTIÃO SALGADO**, Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255. Both shows through May 23.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Modern Art.)

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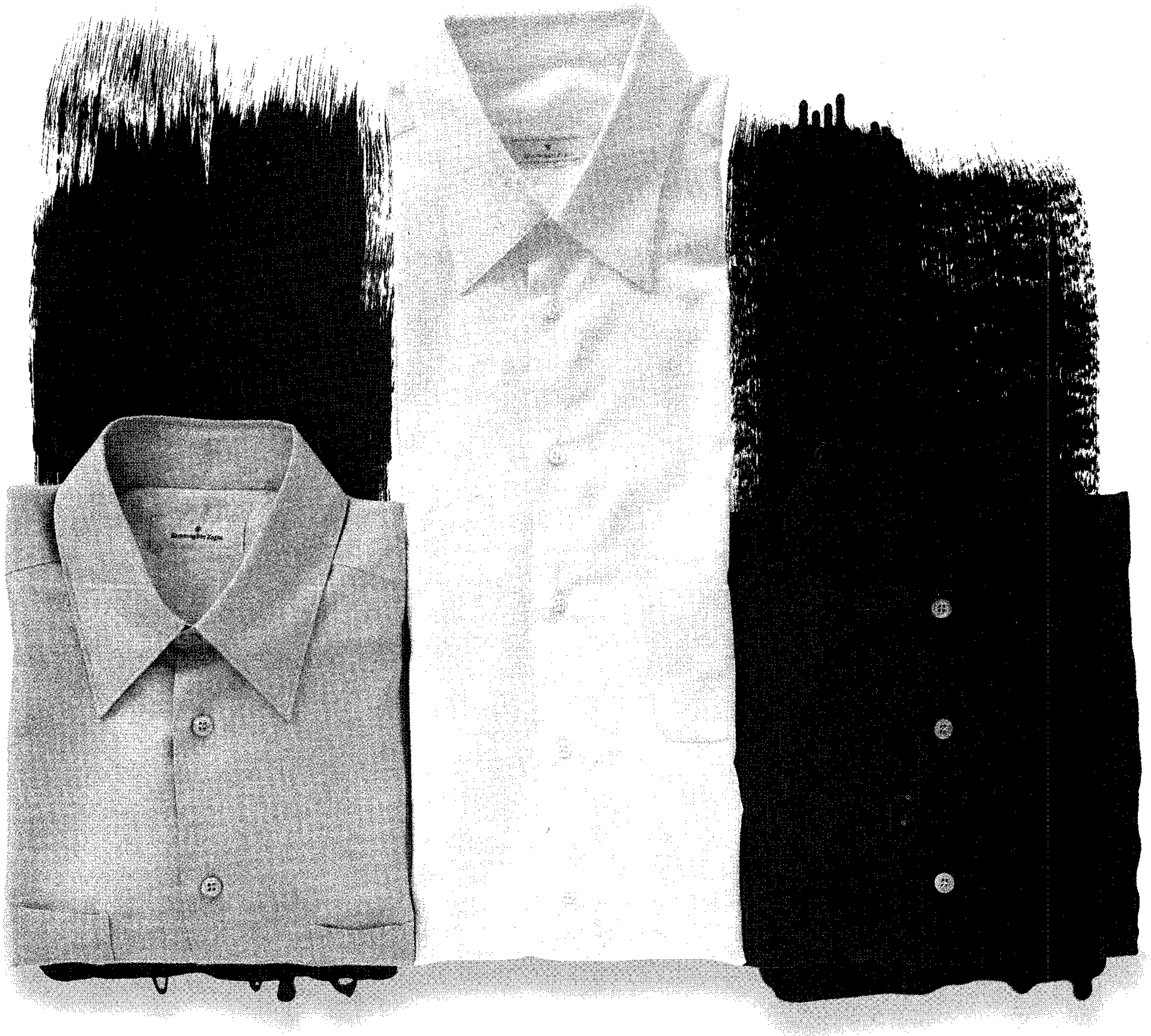
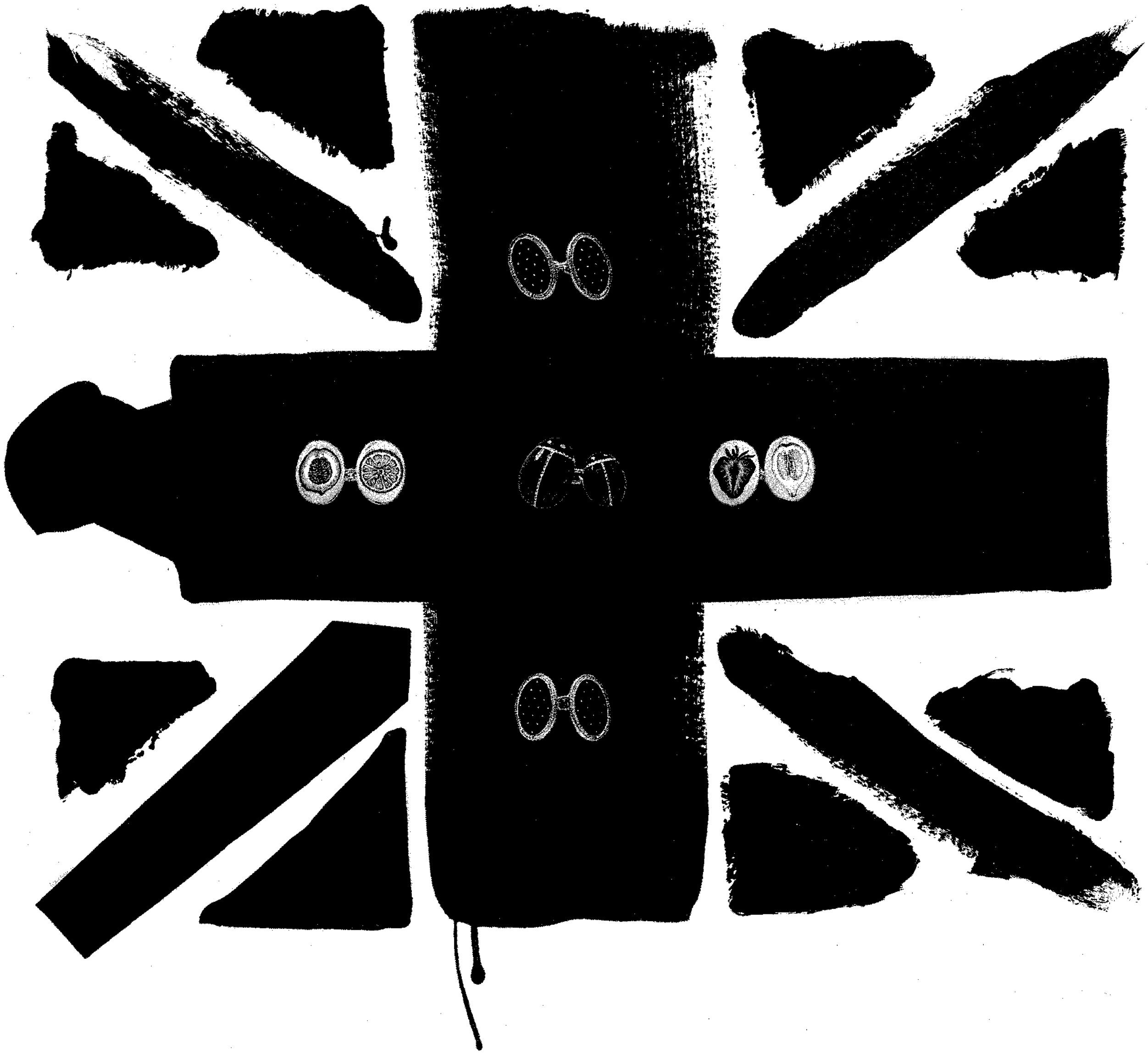


Wardrobe flagships.
A trio of dress shirts with Italian brio from **Ermenegildo Zegna**, in pale-green cotton and rayon; crisp, white cotton; claret linen.

text by Susan Sommers; photography by Anita Calero



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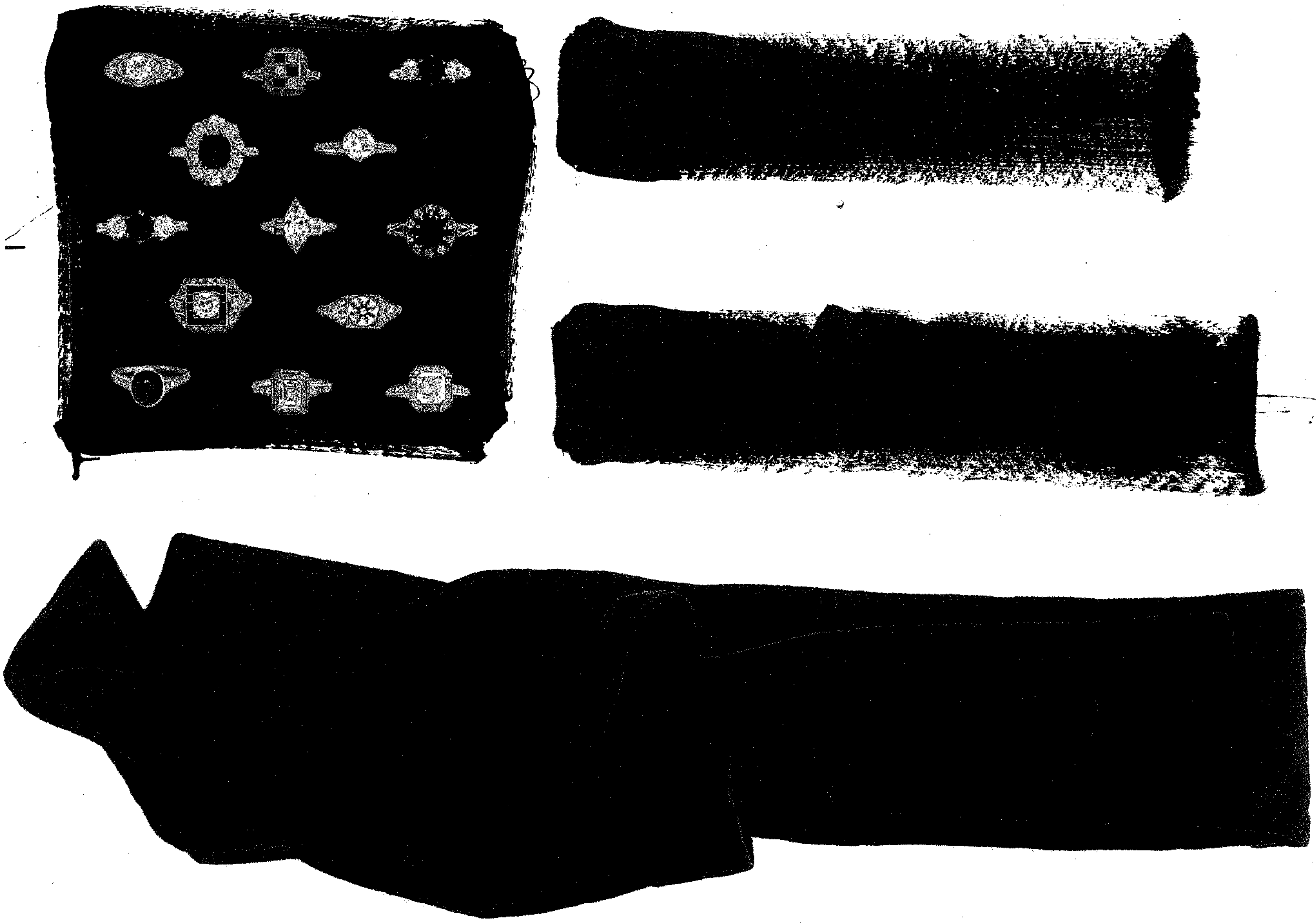

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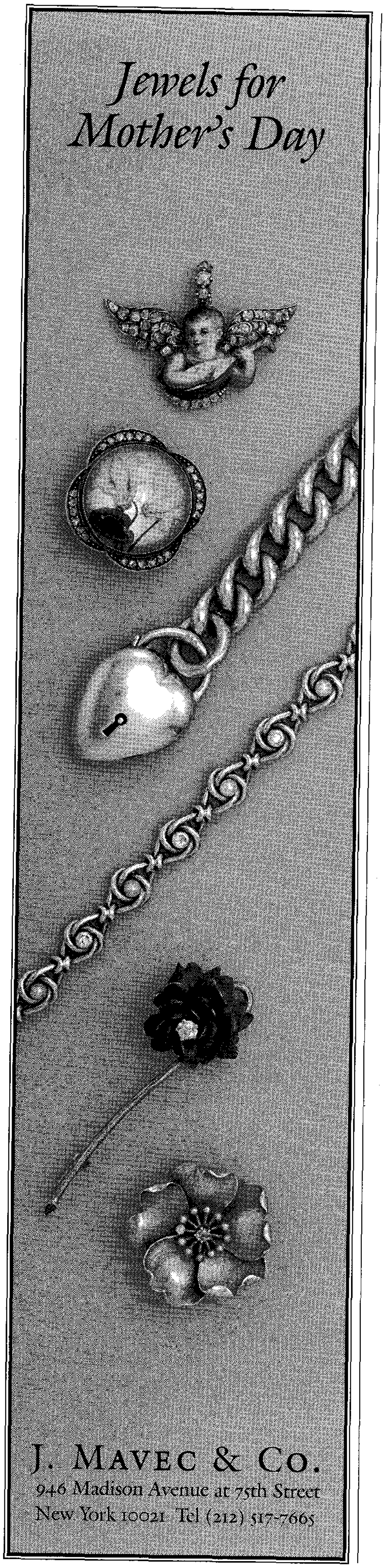

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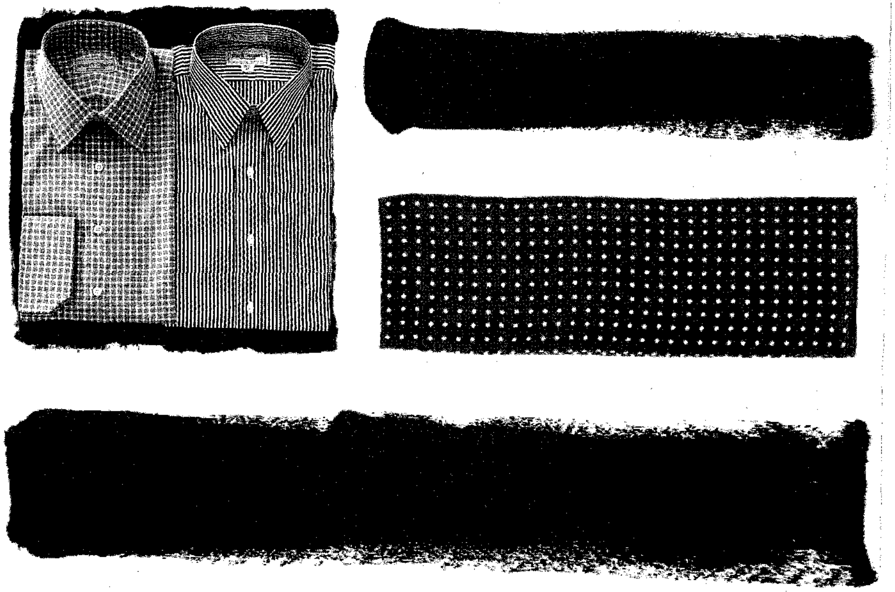

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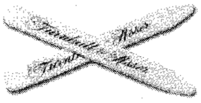

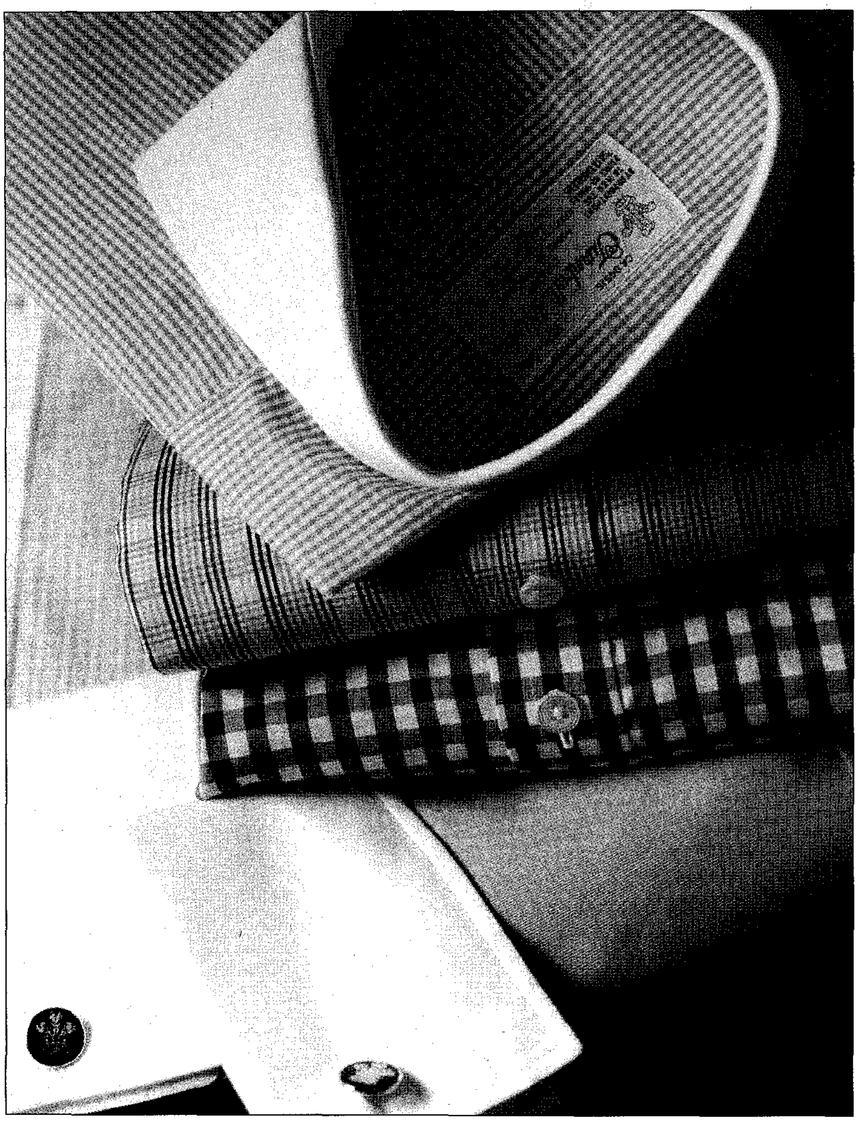

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OPERA

KIROV OPERA—The St. Petersburg-based company presents four Russian operas plus, on April 23 at 7, an opening-night concert spotlighting many of the troupe's leading singers (Galina Gorchakova, Larisa Shevchenko, Gegam Grigorian, Vladimir Ognovenko, Nikolai Putilin, and Constantin Pluzhnikov among them), including several complete opera scenes; with the combined choruses of the Kirov Opera and the Metropolitan Opera (which should yield a powerful sound). Borodin's **PRINCE IGOR**, with Valery Gergiev conducting. (April 24, April 27, and April 30, all at 7:30.) . . . With Boris Gruzin conducting. (April 25 at 12:30.) . . . Prokofiev's **BETROTHAL IN A MONASTERY**, with Mr. Gergiev. (April 25 at 7:30 and May 2 at 12:30.) . . . Glinka's **RUSLAN AND LYUDMILA**, with Mr. Gergiev. (April 28 at 7:30.) . . . With Alexander Titov. (April 29 and May 2 at 7:30.) . . . Tchaikovsky's **MAZEPPA**, with Mr. Gergiev. (May 1 and May 4-5, all at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. Through May 9.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA—Final performances of the season. **PAUL BUNYAN.** (April 22 at 7:30 and April 25 at 1:30.) . . . **CARMEN.** (April 23 at 7:30, April 24-25 at 8, and April 26 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

LA SOCIETÀ DELL'OPERA BUFFA—The Milanese troupe offers a staging of Salieri's "Falstaff" (composed in 1799). (BAM's Majestic Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. April 22-25 at 7:30.)

JUILLIARD OPERA CENTER—Presenting "The Magic Flute," fully staged, in English. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. 769-7406. April 22 and April 24 at 8 and April 26 at 2.)

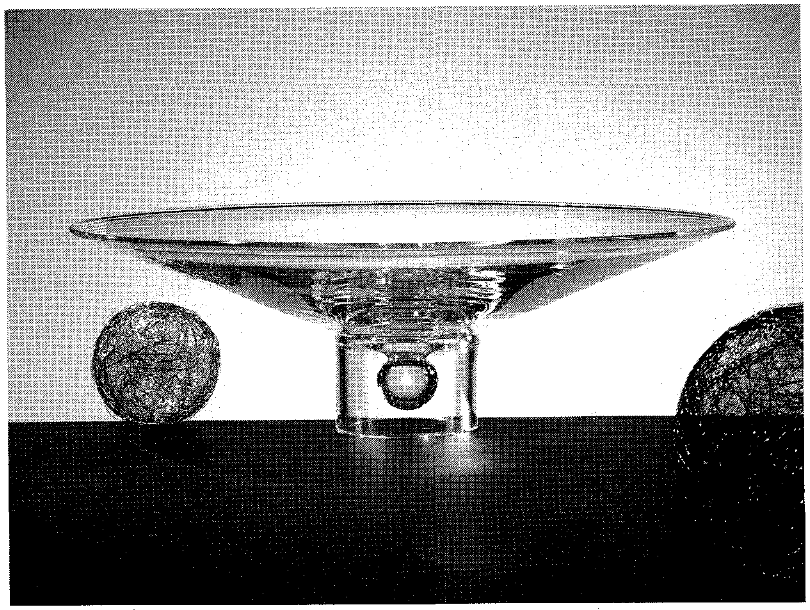
MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC OPERA THEATRE—Performing Smetana's comic opera "The Two Widows," in English. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. 749-2802, ext. 428. April 22 and April 24 at 8 and April 26 at 2:30.)

OPERA ORCHESTRA OF NEW YORK—A concert version of Donizetti's "Poliuto," with soprano Martile Rowland, tenor Fabio Armiliato, and baritone Giovanni Meoni. Eve Queler conducts. (Carnegie Hall. May 4 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC—April 23-25 at 8: Colin Davis conducts Vaughan Williams's "Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis," Michael Tippett's "Ritual Dances from 'The Midsummer Marriage,'" and Elgar's Symphony No. 2. (Avery Fisher Hall.) . . . ¶ April 23-25 at 10:30: As part of the orchestra's "English week," cabaret singer Andrea Marcovicci offers a Noël Coward program following each subscription concert. (Kaplan Penthouse, Lincoln Center. For information about tickets, call 721-6500.) . . . ¶ April 26 at 2: Gisèle Ben-Dor leads members of the Philharmonic in large-scale chamber works by Thomas Adès, Michael Finnissy, Alasdair Nicolson, Mark-Anthony Turnage, Jonathan Harvey, Harrison Birtwistle, and Django Bates. Pianist Joanna MacGregor serves as m.c. (Merkin Concert Hall.) . . . ¶ April 30-May 2 at 8 and May 5 at 7:30: Leonard Slatkin leads Carter's "Remembrance," Mahler's "Kindertotenlieder" (with baritone Dmitri Hvorostovsky), and Josef Suk's "Asrael" Symphony. (Avery Fisher Hall.)

NEW YORK CHAMBER SYMPHONY—Gerard Schwarz conducts Bright Sheng's "Postcards," Mozart's A-Major Piano Concerto (K. 414, with Leon Fleisher), and Brahms's D-Major Serenade. (Alice Tully Hall. April 22 at 8 and April 26 at 5.)



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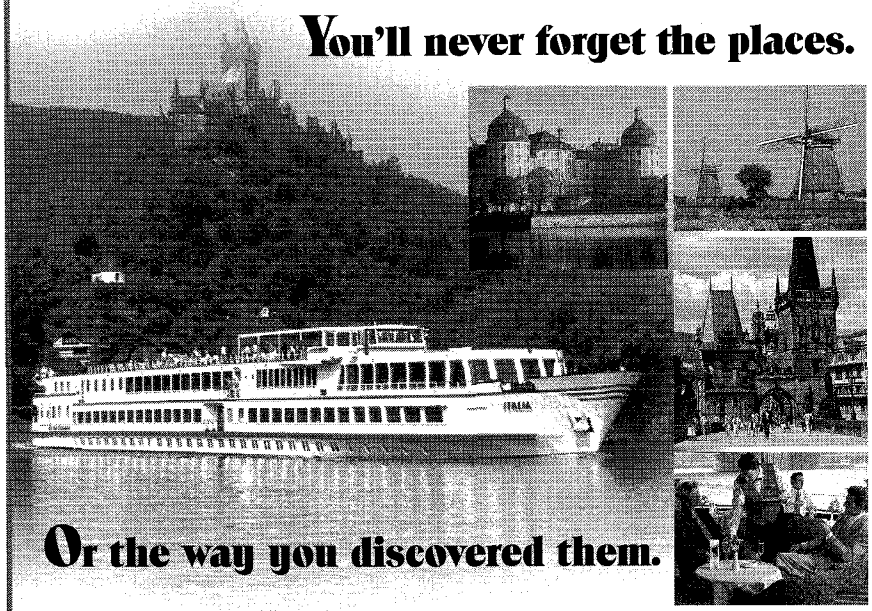
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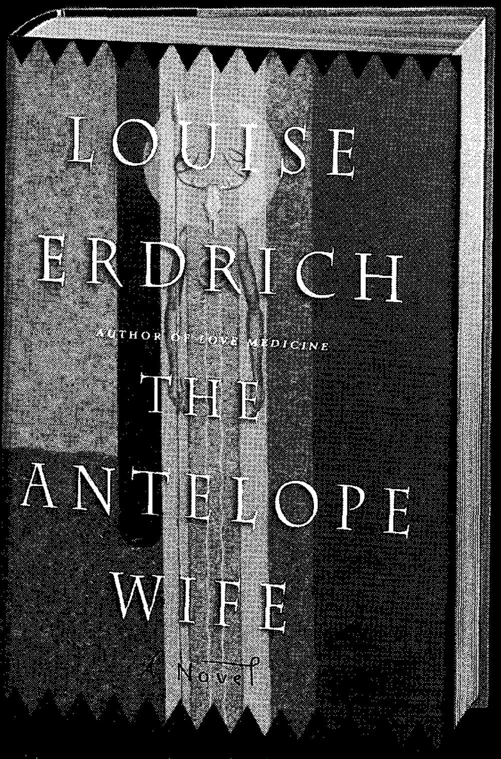

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NEW YORK POPS—Skitch Henderson leads an all-Gershwin program, with pianist André-Michel Schub (performing the Concerto in F). (Carnegie Hall. April 24 at 8.)

MUSIC BEFORE 1800 PRODUCTIONS—Louise Basbas directs motets by Bach, a cantata by Buxtehude, and German Mass movements by Schütz. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. April 26 at 4.)

BACHWORKS—The ensemble performs Bach's "Coffee" and "Peasant" Cantatas. (St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 315 W. 22nd St. April 26 at 5. Tickets at the door.)

NEW YORK METAMORPHOSES ORCHESTRA AND CHOEUR DES ANGES—Eugene Sirotkine conducts Bartók's "Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta" and Messiaen's "Trois Petites Liturgies," with Harry Huff as the featured pianist and Tristan Murail playing the ondes martenot. (Calvary Episcopal Church, Park Ave. at 21st St. April 26 at 5. Admission by contribution.)

ORCHESTRE PHILHARMONIQUE DE MONTE-CARLO—James DePreist conducts Berlioz's "Roman Carnival Overture," Rachmaninoff's "Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini" (with pianist Ignat Solzhenitsyn), and Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 4. (Avery Fisher Hall. April 27 at 7:30.)

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA—Wolfgang Sawallisch conducts Barber's Symphony No. 1, Britten's Violin Concerto (with Frank Peter Zimmermann), and Beethoven's Symphony No. 7. (Carnegie Hall. April 28 at 8.)

ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA—The conductorless ensemble performs Mozart's Symphony No. 33, Dvořák's Serenade for Strings, and works featuring violinist Gidon Kremer, by Schubert, Alexander Wustin, and Sofia Gubaidulina. (Carnegie Hall. May 2 at 8.)

TORONTO SYMPHONY—Jukka-Pekka Saraste conducts Sibelius's "Four Legends from the Kalevala" and Takemitsu's "From Me Flows What You Call Time" (the latter featuring the Nexus percussion ensemble). (Carnegie Hall. May 5 at 8.)

RIVERSIDE SYMPHONY—The Swiss conductor and philanthropist Paul Sacher, now in his eighties, commissioned an extraordinary number of masterpieces from most of our century's leading composers, including Stravinsky, Martinů, Carter, and Dutilleux. A fascinating exhibition of manuscripts of Sacher-funded works opens on May 13 at the Morgan Library (29 E. 36th St.; 685-0008), and, in this concert, George Rothman conducts an aural preview, leading two Sacher commissions—Bartók's "Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta" and Robert Suter's "Trois Nocturnes" (featuring violist Paul Neubauer)—in addition to the Symphony No. 70 by Haydn (one of Sacher's favorite composers). (Alice Tully Hall. May 5 at 8.)

ABSOLUTE ENSEMBLE—Antheil's "Jazz Symphony," Hindemith's "Kammermusik No. 1," and works by six other modern composers, conducted by Kristjan Järvi. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 5 at 8.)

RECITALS

ANNE-SOPHIE MUTTER AND LAMBERT ORKIS—At Carnegie Hall, the violinist and the pianist complete their survey of Beethoven's Violin Sonatas. April 22 at 7:30: Sonatas No. 6, No. 7, and No. 8. . . . ¶ April 30 at 7:30: Sonatas No. 9 (the "Kreutzer") and No. 10.

GUNTHER SCHULLER—A concert and conversation with the composer, with the Borromeo String Quartet offering his Quartet No. 3. (Weill Recital Hall. April 22 at 8.)

EVGENY KISSIN—The eminent pianist performs sonatas by Beethoven (in A Major, Op. 101) and Liszt, as well as Brahms's Four Piano Pieces (Op. 119). (Carnegie Hall. April 23 at 7:30.)

BARGEMUSIC—April 23 at 7:30 and April 26 at 4: Violinist Mark Kaplan performs Bach's E-Major Partita; Schubert's A-Minor String Quartet and Mozart's C-Minor String Quintet round out the program. . . . ¶ April 30 at 7:30: Violinist Mark Peskanov and pianist Richard Bishop perform Beethoven's

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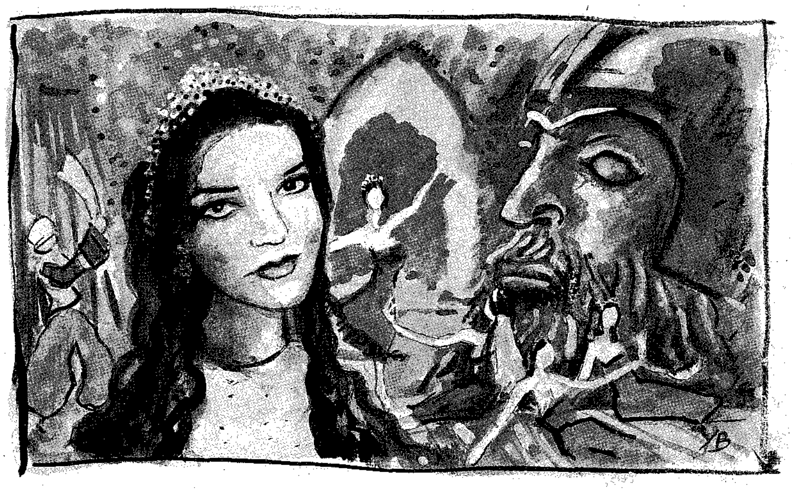

Soprano Galina Gorchakova, appearing with the Kirov Opera in Glinka's "Ruslan and Lyudmila," at the Metropolitan Opera House.

YAN BASELY

"Spring" Sonata; Charles Neidich and Mr. Bishop offer Saint-Saëns's Clarinet Sonata; and all three join for the trio arrangement of Stravinsky's "L'Histoire du Soldat." . . . ¶ May 3 at 4: Leonard Slatkin is not only a fine conductor (he's leading the New York Philharmonic this week) but also a sterling pianist. In that capacity he is appearing, along with his wife, the soprano Linda Hohenfeld, Mr. Peskanov, and colleagues, performing works by Barber, Gershwin, and others. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

NewMusic Mannes—George Crumb is practically unrivalled among composers for writing works that are at once wildly experimental and immediately accessible. This concert brings together four works that together suggest the range of his work during the middle of his career: "Black Angels" (1970) for electric string quartet, "Eleven Echoes of Autumn" (1965), "Night of the Four Moons" (1969), and his "Processional" (1983) for solo piano. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. April 23 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Ken Noda—In his first New York recital in nearly a decade, the pianist performs works by Schubert, Brahms, Chopin, and Schumann (his "Kreisleriana"). (Metropolitan Museum. April 23 at 8.)

Hagen String Quartet—The foursome plays quartets by Bartók (his Fourth), Georg Friedrich Haas, and Mozart (in D Minor, K. 421). (Alice Tully Hall. April 24 at 8.)

Theodora Hanslowe—In her New York début recital, the mezzo-soprano performs songs by Schumann, Schoenberg, Poulenc, and others; with pianist Mark Markham. (Weill Recital Hall. April 24 at 8.)

Ian Hobson—The British pianist performs Ravel's "Valses Nobles et Sentimentales," Schubert's G-Major Sonata (D. 894), and numerous Schubert/Godowsky transcriptions. (92nd Street Y. April 25 at 8.)

Sundays on the Island—April 26 at noon: Soprano Elizabeth Hendrickson, cellist Lawrence Zoernig, and pianist Silvia Eversol. . . . ¶ May 3 at noon: Rebecca Young, the New York Philharmonic's co-principal violist, performs Bach's Sonata No. 2, Schumann's "Märchenerzählungen," and several "Jazzicals" by Ilan Rechtman, who assists at the piano. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478.)

Richard Stoltzman—The clarinettist plays Lutoslawski's "Dance Preludes," Carter's "GRA," Schumann's "Fantasiestücke" (Op. 73), and sonatas by Prokofiev and Brahms (in F Minor). Pianist David Deveau assists. (Washington Irving High School, Irving Pl. at 16th St. April 25 at 8. For information about tickets, call 586-4680. . . . ¶ Colden Center, Queens College, Flushing. 718-793-8080. April 26 at 2.)

Alfred Brendel—The pianist offers sonatas by Haydn, Mozart (in C Major, K. 330), and Schubert (in B-Flat Major, D. 960). (Carnegie Hall. April 26 at 2.)

English Chamber Orchestra Wind Ensemble—Six players from the orchestra—a pair each of clarinettists, bassoonists, and French hornists—perform works by Mozart (including his Serenade in E-Flat Major, K. 375), Beethoven (his Sextet, Op. 71), and Franz Krommer. (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola. Park Ave. at 84th St. April 26 at 4. Tickets at the door.)

Stefan Vladar—The pianist performs Mozart's "Duport" Variations and sonatas by Beethoven (the "Appassionata") and Schubert (in B-Flat Major, D. 960). (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. April 26 at 5.)

At the Mansfield—April 27 at 8: Pianist Eleonor Bindman performs works by Schumann and Chopin. . . . ¶ May 4: Violinist Lara St. John and pianist Ilan Rechtman offer Beethoven's Violin Sonata No. 7 and the Bizet/Waxman "Carmen" Fantasy. (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. No tickets necessary.)

"Guitar Among Others"—The chamber series spotlights guitarist Winslow Browning and narrator Isaiah Sheffer, performing Castelnuovo-Tedesco's "Platero and I," a cycle based on Juan Ramón Jiménez's tale about a poet, his donkey, and their Andalusian village. (Weill Recital Hall. April 28 at 8.)

Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg with Sergio and Odair Assad—The violinist and the guitar duo offer Gypsy-inspired works. (92nd Street Y. April 29 at 8.)

Aki Takahashi and Ursula Oppens—The two pianists present an evening of solo and duo works by Yuji Takahashi, Richard Teitelbaum, Ushio Torikai, and Haruna Miyake. (Merkin Concert Hall. April 30 at 8.)

Musicians from Marlboro—Performing Mozart's D-Major String Quintet (K. 593), Chausson's "Chanson Perpétuelle," and Brahms's Piano Quintet. (Metropolitan Museum. April 30 at 8. . . . ¶ Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. May 3 at 2. For information about tickets, call 586-4680.)

New Music Consort—Presenting Varèse's "Ionisation," Chou Wen-chung's "Clouds" (String Quartet), Stockhausen's "Zodiac," and pieces by Chen Yi and Marita Bolles. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. May 1 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

Guarneri Quartet—An all-Beethoven concert, comprising the String Quartets in A Major (Op. 18, No. 5) and in F Major (Op. 135, with the "Grosse Fuge"). (Metropolitan Museum. May 2 at 8.)

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St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble—An all-Mozart program: the Bassoon Sonata in B-Flat Major, the "Kegelstatt" Trio, and the Divertimento for String Trio in E-Flat Major (K. 563). (Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway. May 3 at 2. For information about tickets, call 212-874-7470.)

New York Philharmonic Ensembles—Members of the orchestra play a Devienne trio sonata, Hummel's "Grand Septet," Britten's "Phantasy Quartet" (for oboe and strings), and Saint-Saëns's Septet. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 3 at 3.)

Emerson String Quartet—The ensemble performs quartets by Beethoven (in F Major, Op. 135, and in B-Flat Major, Op. 130, with the "Grosse Fuge") and Wolfgang Rihm (his Fourth). (Alice Tully Hall. May 3 at 2.)

Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio—Performing Brahms's A-Major Violin Sonata, Chopin's Cello Sonata, and Mendelssohn's C-Minor Piano Trio. (92nd Street Y. May 5-6 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Global Steps—Two traditional dance programs feature performers from around the world, while a third offers the opportunity to kick up your heels: April 25 at 8 and April 26 at 4: Dancers from Guyana, Trinidad, and Suriname gather for a combination of music and dance, inspired by birth, marriage, death, and the agricultural cycle, called a *kitchrie*, which is also the word for a ritual meal at a Hindu wedding. The affair celebrates Indian influences on Caribbean culture. (Richmond Hill High School Auditorium, 89-30 114th St., Richmond Hill, Queens. For more information, call 695-6860.) . . . ¶ April 26 at 3, U Win Maung, from Burma, and Yoko Onoe, Momo Suzuki, and Karin Amano, from Japan, take the stage for the Lotus Fine Arts Center's "Story-Telling Through Dance" program, with Maung interpreting the Ramayana, and the dancers acting out a rice drama, a traditional folk dance. (109 W. 27th St. 627-1076.) . . . ¶ May 1 at 9: A taverna appears on the Upper East Side, with traditional Greek folk dancing to the sounds of the laouto, violin, clarinet, and drum. For the uninitiated, lessons start at 7:30. (Hungarian House, 213 E. 82nd St. For more information, call 942-3768.)

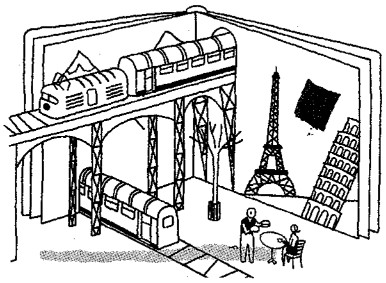
Readings—April 22 at 7: By actors Cynthia Harris, Ivy Austin, and Malachy McCourt, from the mystery stories of Ruth Rendell, Jim Thompson, and G.K. Chesterton. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.) . . . ¶ April 27 at 7:30: By poets Star Black and David Lehman. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ May 1 at 10:30: By photographer Nan Goldin, publisher Morgan Entrekin, writer C. Carr, and others, from the work of the late poet and performance artist Kathy Acker. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door.)

Talks—April 25 from 9 to 4: A symposium investigating the 1839 Amistad case, of recent movie fame, with Yale University history professor David Brion Davis, Harvard Law School professor Randall Kennedy, New York University cinema-studies professor Robert Sklar, and other jurists, scholars, and filmmakers. (Association of the Bar of the City of New York, 42 W. 44th St. For more information, call 867-1170.) . . . ¶ April 28 at 7: Writer Elie Wiesel celebrates the centennial of the publication of Zola's "J'Accuse" by discussing the Dreyfus Affair. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160.) . . . ¶ May 3 at 3: Asia Society gallery director Vishakha N. Desai talks with video artist Bill Viola about the influences of Sufism and Zen Buddhism on his work. (Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. 517-2742.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Grand Tours

In the days before jet airplanes, the standard rationale for going to Europe was that travel broadened the mind. Today, most of us don't need such a noble excuse: the ease and appeal of a European tour is hard to resist. Diane Johnson, the author of several novels, including **Le Divorce** (Plume), a comedy of manners set in the City of Light, and a travel memoir called **Natural Opium**, is smitten with the Continent, and she divides her time between San Francisco and Paris. Johnson is fond of Polly Platt's **French or Foe?** (Cultural Crossing), a primer on living and working in France which has helped her to navigate the difficult terrain of cultural differences. "Until reading it, I didn't know you weren't supposed to ask to use the bathroom when at a French dinner party," she says. She admires Edith Wharton's recently reissued **French Ways and Their Meaning** (Berkshire House) because it is "full of praise for the French character, with an implicit disapproval of the American one. She wants us to have more culture, sweetness and light in the Arnoldian sense."



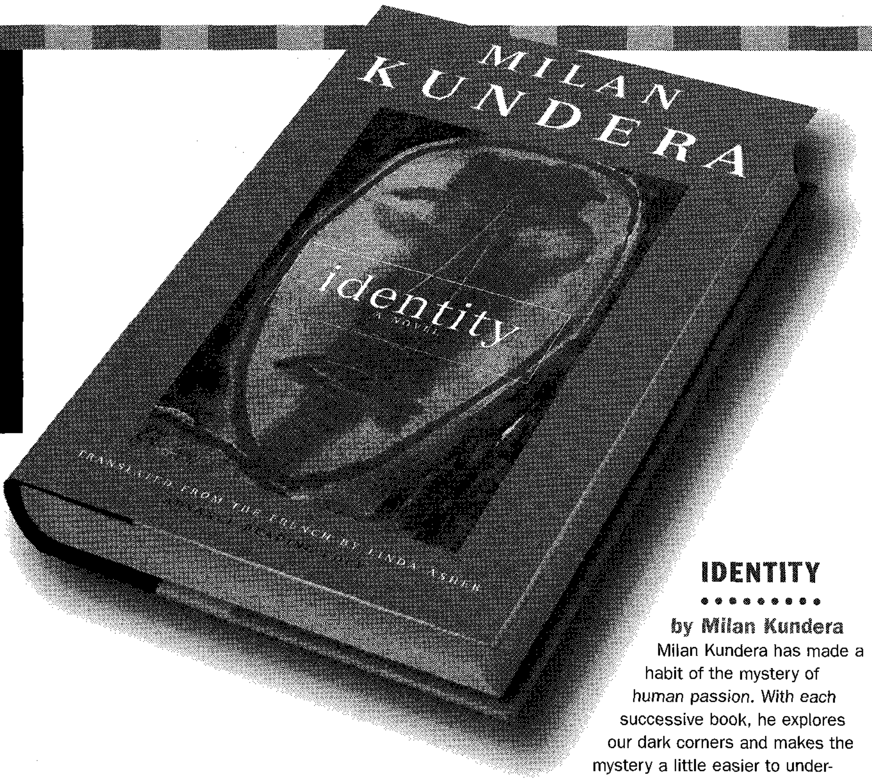
Johnson also cites **From the Holy Mountain** (Henry Holt), by William Dalrymple, who, starting from Mt. Athos, in northern Greece, retraced the Middle Eastern journey of a sixth-century Orthodox monk. Johnson visited Thessaloníki a few months ago to see a temporary exhibit of icons, paintings, and illuminated manuscripts from the twenty monasteries on the mountain. The treasures were being shown in public for the first time in a millennium, and Johnson notes that they had never before been seen by women, since women are not allowed on Mt. Athos. "It was fascinating," Johnson says. "I had never liked icons, but these were the work of great painters. The exhibit awoke my interest in the Macedonian region."

Among European guidebooks, Johnson has one particular favorite: **Ruskin's Venice**, edited by Arnold Whittick, which offers not only the great Victorian's peerless aesthetic perceptions but also such modern-day conveniences as phone numbers and opening and closing hours.

LAURENT CILLUFFO

THE
Book
PAGE.

[MILAN KUNDERA]



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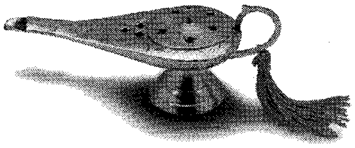
At what moment did the real turn into the unreal, reality into reverie? Where was the border? Where is the border?
-Milan Kundera, *Identity*



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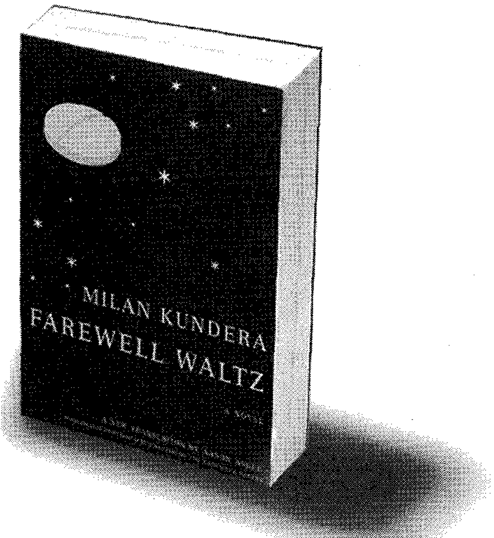
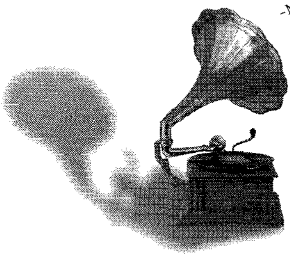
This is what papa told me when I was five years old:
In music every key is a small royal court.
-Milan Kundera,
Book of Laughter and Forgetting





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THE MOVIES

OPENINGS

The Big Hit—Mark Wahlberg and Lou Diamond Phillips star in this comic thriller about a hit man whose latest job doesn't go exactly as planned. Directed by Che-Kirk Wong. Opening April 24.

Black Dog—Illegal contraband is moved from Atlanta to New Jersey in this chase thriller starring Patrick Swayze, Randy Travis, and Meat Loaf. Directed by Kevin Hooks. Opening May 1.

Dancer, Texas Pop. 81—A drama about four young men on the verge of graduating from high school who dream of leaving their small town. Written and directed by Tim McCanlies. Opening May 1.

Déjà Vu—A love story directed by Henry Jaglom. With Stephen Dillane, Victoria Foyt, and Vanessa Redgrave. Opening April 24. (Cinema 3rd Avenue and Quad Cinema.)

Didn't Do It for Love—Writer-director Monika Treut's documentary about the dominatrix turned therapist Eva Norvind. Opening May 1. (Cinema Village.)

A Friend of the Deceased—A black comedy about a man in Kiev who hires a hit man to kill him, and then tries to call the whole thing off. Directed by Vyacheslav Krishtofovich. In Russian. Opening May 1. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Healing by Killing—Medical ethics, from the Nazi death camps to contemporary genetic engineering, are the concerns of this film written and directed by Nitzan Aviram. In German and English. April 22-May 5. (Film Forum.)

He Got Game—Denzel Washington stars in Spike Lee's drama about basketball and family relations. Opening May 1.

Marius and Jeannette—A love story, written and directed by Robert Guédiguian, starring Gérard Meylan and Ariane Ascaride. In French. Opening April 24. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Les Misérables—Bille August's version of the Victor Hugo novel, with Liam Neeson as Valjean, Geoffrey Rush as Javert, Uma Thurman as Fantine, Claire Danes as Cosette, and Hans Matheson as Marius. Opening May 1.

Parallel Sons—The story of the relationship between a young white man living in the backwoods and a black escaped convict. Written and directed by John G. Young. Opening May 1. (The Screening Room.)

Shooting Fish—The romantic and comic adventures of two London con men, directed by Stefan Schwartz. Opening May 1.

Sliding Doors—Gwyneth Paltrow stars in a love story, written and directed by Peter Howitt. Opening April 24. (Angelika Film Center, Gotham Cinema, and Lincoln Square.)

Tarzan and the Lost City—The Lord of the Apes returns to the jungle to save his old home in this adventure story, starring Casper Van Dien, Jane March, and Steven Waddington. Directed by Carl Schenkel. Opening April 24.

The Truce—Based on Primo Levi's memoir "The Reawakening," starring John Turturro as Levi. Directed by Francesco Rosi. In English and Italian. Opening April 24. (Angelika Film Center and Cinema II.)

Two Girls and a Guy—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening April 24. (Angelika Film Center, Cinema I, and Lincoln Square.)

The Ugly—A thriller from New Zealand that examines the psyche of a serial killer. With Paolo Rotundo, Roy Ward, and Rebecca Hobbs; written and directed by Scott Reynolds. Opening May 1. (Village East Cinemas.)

Wilde—The life of Oscar Wilde, directed by Brian Gilbert and starring Stephen Fry. Opening May 1. (Paris and Quad Cinema.)

FILM NOTES

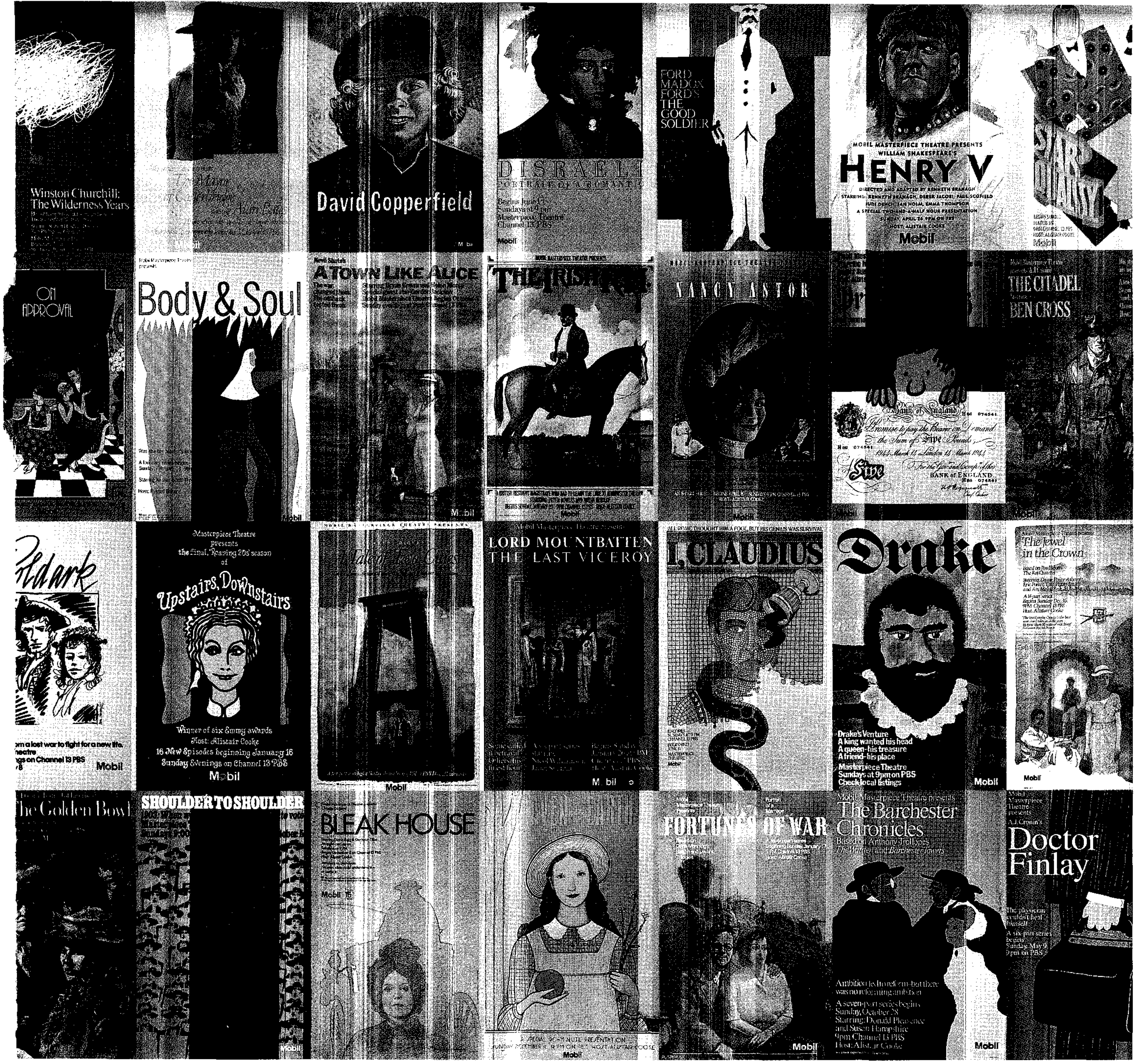
(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

Anatomy of a Murder (1959)—It's more like "Lingerie of a Murder"—much of the film is taken up with debates over Lee Remick's panties. Sweetly feckless and sexy, Remick is the wife of an Army lieutenant (Ben Gazzara) who killed a man for raping her. James Stewart stars as the husband's wily defense lawyer; Arthur O'Connell is his tippling partner, Eve Arden his dry-witted secretary, and George C. Scott his slickest prosecutorial opponent. Otto Preminger's courtroom drama is jumbo-sized and gimmicky (Joseph N. Welch, the hero of the Senate McCarthy hearings, plays the judge), and the controversies over its frank discussion of rape evaporated long ago. But the movie is still surprisingly absorbing, and Stewart gives one of his best, homey star performances.—*Michael Sragow* (Museum of Modern Art; April 26.)

As Good as It Gets—A romantic comedy directed and co-written (with Mark Andrus) by James L. Brooks, in which an improbable trio overcomes a heap of troubles and finds collective happiness, sitcom style. Jack Nicholson stars as a romance novelist with a seriously alienating manner, Helen Hunt is a waitress with a young son who has a life-threatening disease, and Greg Kinnear is a gay painter with a sweet smile and no visible erotic attachments. You keep expecting to hear a laugh track.—*Daphne Merkin* (1/5/98) (Embassy 2, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Butcher Boy—Neil Jordan's daring new film, adapted from the novel by Patrick McCabe and co-written by the two of them, moves with a nervous energy that suggests the vivid workings of the well-populated imagination of twelve-year-old Francie Brady (Eamonn Owens). The film is set in a bleak, gossip-ridden Northern Irish town in the early sixties. Francie's parents are at each other's throats: his father (Stephen Rea) is a drunkard and his mother (Aisling O'Sullivan) is a fragile creature who takes "tablets" in order to cope. Francie's growing sense of humiliation and outrage is focussed on Mrs. Nugent (Fiona Shaw), the town snob, who personifies all the unfairness and cruelty of Francie's life. Owens, with his thatch of red hair and shining eyes, makes Francie's boyish zest as real as his pain, and Shaw plays his nemesis with great subtlety—as a woman lost in her own disdain. This extraordinary film is a reminder that childhood is not the cutesy-pie concoction American filmmakers would have it be.—*D.M.* (4/6/98) (Angelika Film Center, Beekman, and Lincoln Square.)

Chinese Box—Wayne Wang's elegant, sorrowful valentine to his native city of Hong Kong stars Jeremy Irons as John, a British expatriate journalist, and Gong Li as Vivian, the gravely beautiful, elusive woman he loves. The movie opens on New Year's Eve, 1996, six months before the Crown Colony is to revert to Chinese control: wealthy residents gather in banquet halls to toast the making of future deals, while in the poorer parts of the city women with worn-out faces operate produce stands. After John is diag-


Winston Churchill: The Wilderness Years
David Copperfield
DISRAELI
FORD MADOX FORD'S THE GOOD SOLDIER
HENRY V
STARQUALITY
ON APPROVAL
Body & Soul
A TOWN LIKE ALICE
THE IRISH R.M.
NANCY ASTOR
THE CITADEL
BEN CROSS
Poldark
Upstairs, Downstairs
LORD MOUNTBATTEN THE LAST VICEROY
I, CLAUDIUS
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nosed with a fatal illness, he quits his job and, with a photojournalist friend (Ruben Blades), wanders the underside of Hong Kong—the brothels, the betting parlors, and the markets where animals are slaughtered—with his video camera in search of authentic images. The film is extraordinary to look at for its ingenious mixture of visual styles, and it will speak to anyone who has ever tried to take possession of a place or a person in the hope of taking possession of himself. In English and Cantonese.—*D.M.* (4/20/98) (Angelika Film Center.)

Fireworks—The seventh and most sombre work from the cultish Japanese director Takeshi Kitano. In the new film, which he also wrote and co-edited, Kitano plays Nishi, a policeman on the slide. Some colleagues were shot on duty, and, rightly or wrongly, Nishi takes the blame. Meanwhile, his wife is dying, so he takes her away for a country vacation, which he finances by robbing a bank; despite all the cops and gangsters on their trail, the two of them enjoy a last, almost wordless idyll. No one but Kitano would have thought to combine cold spasms of violence with such a tender portrait of marriage. In Japanese.—*Anthony Lane* (3/30/98) (Film Forum.)

Good Will Hunting—Matt Damon plays a belligerent working-class genius from South Boston who's been abused in foster homes and is now being given a chance to triumph over his past; Robin Williams is the maverick shrink who helps him understand his

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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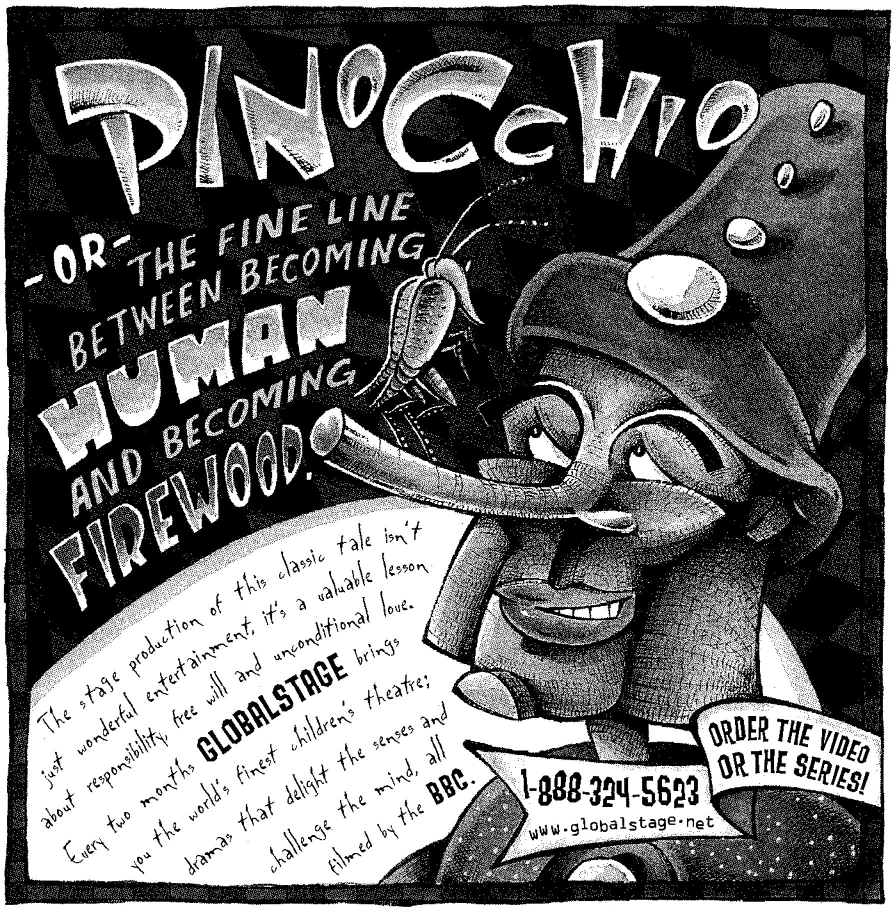
(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy 1, 2, and 3, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.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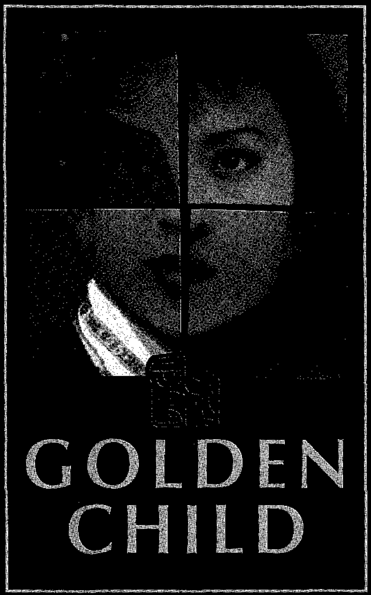
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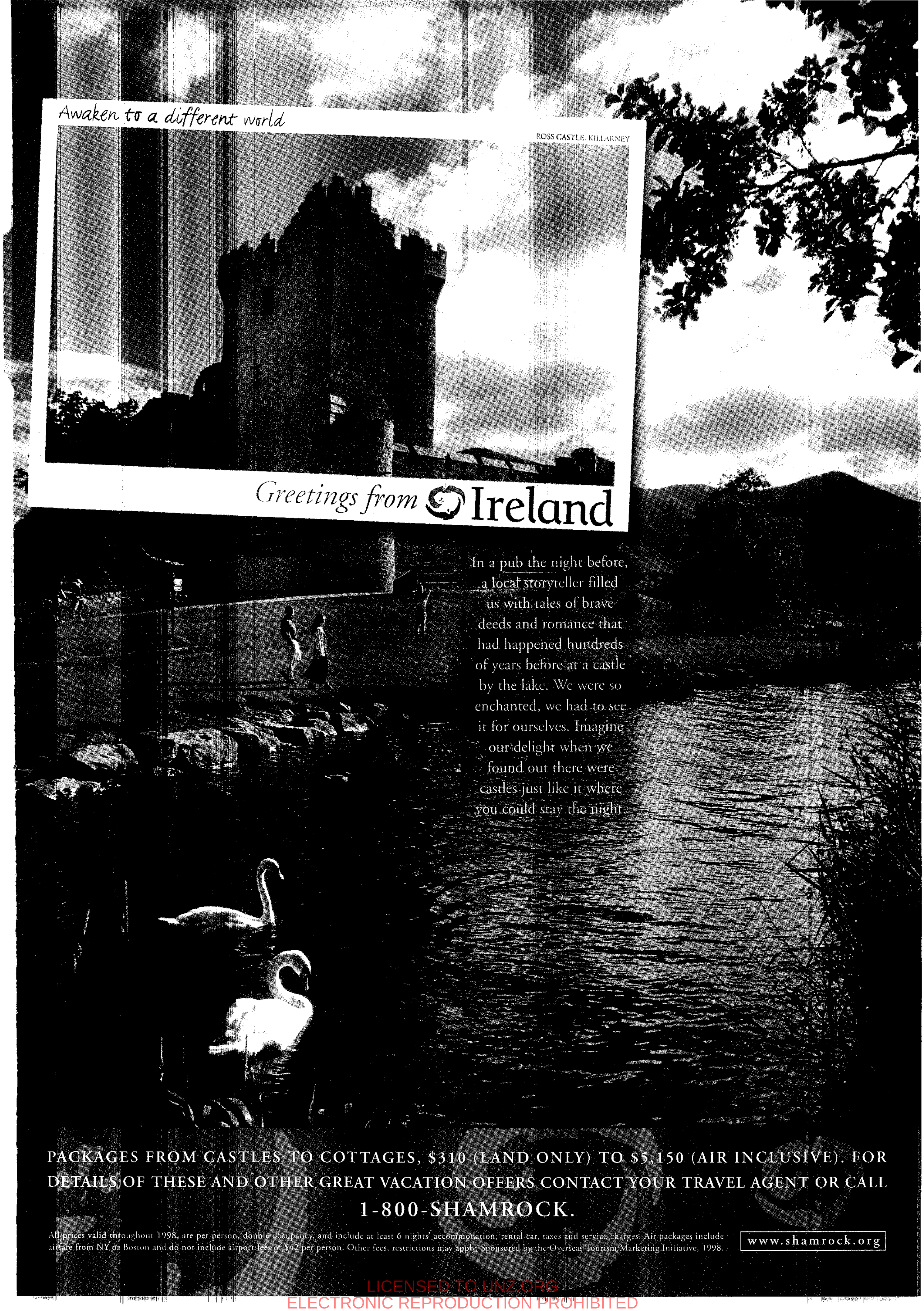

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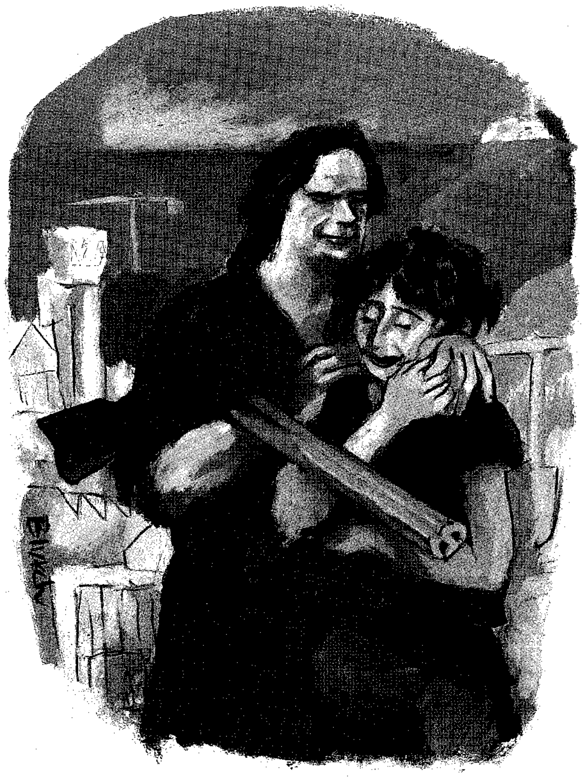
demons; and Minnie Driver is the unsnobbish Harvard girlfriend who tries to heal him with acceptance. If it sounds treacly, it's not, thanks to a honed script (co-written by Damon and Ben Affleck, who plays Damon's best pal), subtle performances, and surprisingly warm direction by Gus Van Sant.—*D.M.* (1/19/98) (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, State, and Village East Cinemas.)

I Am a Camera (1955)—Derived from the same Christopher Isherwood Berlin stories that were later used in "Cabaret," but done in a more madcap style. Julie Harris is Sally ("Shall we have a drink first or shall we go right to bed?") Bowles, and Laurence Harvey is Isherwood, with Shelley Winters and Anton Diffring in the subplot. Henry Cornelius (who directed "Genevieve") did this erratic version from John Collier's adaptation of the John van Druten play.—*Pauline Kael* (A Different Light Bookstore; April 26.)



Opening April 24, Gérard Meylan and Ariane Ascaride in "Marius and Jeannette."

Love and Death on Long Island—A mischievous, surprising film about unlikely romantic pursuit. John Hurt is a British author of highbrow novels who lives in reclusive Luddite splendor until he is smitten with a teen-flick heartthrob (Jason Priestley). One of the many ways in which the film subverts our expectations is by refusing to condescend to its central character; we come to see the lovesick novelist as half stalker, half *poète maudit*, transfigured by romantic greatness. Directed by Richard Kwietniowski, the movie is less about the nature of homoerotic longing than about the closeted nature of love itself.—*D.M.* (3/9/98) (Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sutton.)

A Price Above Rubies—Renée Zellweger looks alternately bewildered and pouty in her role as the wife of an ultra-Orthodox scholar (Glenn Fitzgerald) who treats marital sex as an indecent diversion from his spiritual duties. The claustrophobic feel of the couple's Borough Park community is effectively rendered, but the movie's emotional tone wobbles confusingly between magic realism and poorly nuanced character study. Still, there's the kernel of something interesting in this I. B. Singer-like tale of a young woman born into the wrong culture who eventually finds a way to make a new life for herself—replete with a Hispanic lover and unkosher egg rolls. With "ER"'s Julianna Margulies, who is utterly convincing as a proper Hasidic wife and mother. Written and directed by Boaz Yakin.—*D.M.* (Village East Cinemas. . . . ¶ Paris; through April 30.)

Primary Colors—Mike Nichols and Elaine May's adaptation of Joe Klein's best-seller purrs along rather winningly and even manages, in the long run, to weave a sad, thoughtful tale. John Travolta peddles his Clinton imitation softly, and Emma Thompson is convincing as his cool, politically driven wife. Although there's no political depth to May's writing, Nichols has spun a big, brash Hollywood confection that will send audiences home with still more Clintonia to talk about.—*Bruce Diones* (Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Metro Cinema, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, Waverly, and Ziegfeld.)

Purple Noon (1960)—Maurice Ronet and Alain Delon as decadent Americans loafing in Italy—Ronet rich and vicious, Delon poor, amoral, and murderous. When Delon tries on Ronet's clothes, it's clear that they look better on him. The director, René Clément, keeps this thriller in the sun-drenched-holiday style of travel posters, with homosexual hatred and envy festering. All it has going for it is this sensuous, kicky atmosphere; you feel as if you're breathing something beautiful and rotten. With Marie Laforêt as the shared girlfriend. Adapted from Patricia Highsmith's "The Talented Mr. Ripley." In French.—*P.K.* (Museum of Modern Art; April 24-25.)

The Spanish Prisoner—A young inventor, Joe (Campbell Scott), dreams up something called "the Process" that is destined to bring untold wealth to his bosses but not to himself. When he airs this grievance to Jimmy Dell (Steve Martin), a businessman whom he meets in the Caribbean, he finds himself enmeshed in a plot from which there is no escape, unless you count the suspiciously loving attentions of Susan (Rebecca Pidgeon), a fellow-employee. This is the fifth movie to be written and directed by David Mamet, and it's his most bizarre one yet; people speak in that dreamy, lockjawed manner we first heard in "House of Games," and their entire lives appear to be lived under the spell of some nameless paranoia. If you're prepared to ignore the plot's absurdities, the film is addictive, and Carter Burwell's score works on you like a massage. The film also offers the sharpest and most quizzical work that Steve Martin has turned in for some time. With Ben Gazzara, as the snaky Mr. Klein.—*A.L.* (4/13/98) (Angelika Film Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Taste of Cherry—Abbas Kiarostami's new film follows a prosperous man, Mr. Badii (Homayoun Ershadi, heading up a cast of nonprofessional actors), as he drives through the parched hills around Teheran begging strangers to help bury him once he commits suicide. The film isn't quite the masterpiece some critics are calling it; the sometimes ponderous existentialism seems too closely modelled on European masterpieces of a generation ago, and its ending is too clever by half. But it is a collection of small, scattered miracles. In Farsi.—*Sarah Kerr* (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

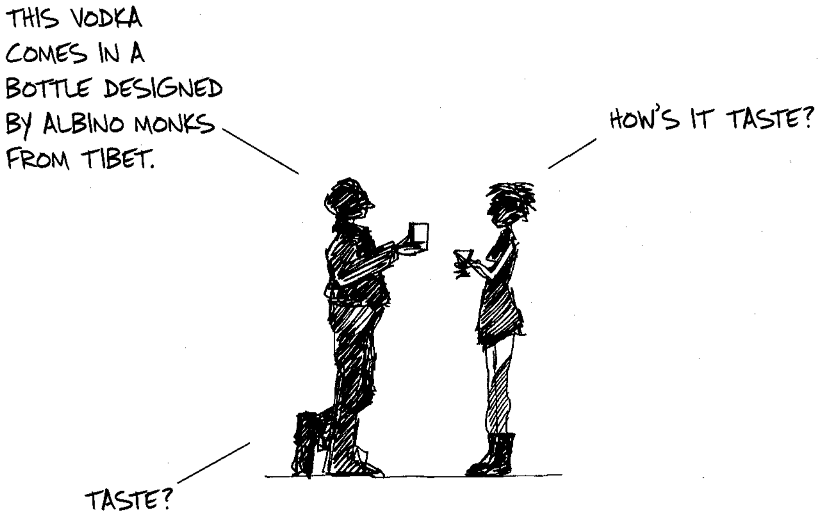
Titanic—At well over three hours, James Cameron's grand new picture has plenty of romance to get through before it breaks the vessel in half. Leonardo DiCaprio plays the freewheeling Jack, who wins a steerage ticket and finds himself falling for the wealthy Rose (Kate Winslet), to the disapproval of her mother (Frances Fisher) and her brute of a fiancé (Billy Zane). The social animus of the story, like its imaginative majesty, is Dickensian; this all feels like two hundred million dollars well spent.—*A.L.* (12/15/97) (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown (1988)—The most original pop writer-director of the eighties, Pedro Almodóvar is Godard with a human face—a happy face. This is a movie where after a while you can't tell sexy from funny. Pepa (Carmen Maura), an actress who works in TV and commercials, turns on her answering machine and learns that she has been jilted. Infuriated, she dashes around, on spike heels, in a short, tight skirt, trying to confront her longtime live-in lover, the elegant, vain Iván (Fernando Guillén). The women of the title include Iván's early lover (Julieta Serrano), his new lover (Kiti Manver), and two (Rossy De Palma and María Barranco) who are involved with his son (Antonio Banderas). Sleek-legged and chic, they run the theatrical gamut. In Spanish.—*P.K.* (Symphony Space; April 28.)

ALSO PLAYING

THE BIG LEBOWSKI (reviewed in our issue of 3/23/98): Chelsea West, Coronet Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **THE BIG ONE**: Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square. . . . **CHARACTER**: Angelika Film Center, Eastside Playhouse, and Regency. . . . **CITY OF ANGELS**: Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, State, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **GREASE**: Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **JUNK MAIL**: Quad Cinema and 62nd & Broadway. . . . **LOST IN SPACE**: Astor Plaza, 84th Street Sixplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **MAJOR LEAGUE: BACK TO THE MINORS**: Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **MERCURY RISING**: Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Park & 86th Street Cinemas. . . . **MY GIANT**: Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **NEIL SIMON'S THE ODD COUPLE II**: Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea West, East 85th Street, Embassy 3, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Lincoln Square. . . . **NIGHTWATCH**: Embassy 2, 19th Street East 6, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **THE OBJECT OF MY AFFECTION**: Chelsea West, Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **PAULIE**: Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Guild. . . . **THE PLAYERS CLUB**: Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, 19th Street East 6, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **SOUR GRAPES**: Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **SPECIES II**: Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Metro Cinema, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Waverly. . . . **SUICIDE KINGS**: Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **TWENTYFOURSEVEN**: Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **WILD MAN BLUES**: Angelika Film Center. . . . **WILD THINGS**: Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.

BLITCH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REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

LM Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through April 30: “Grey Gardens” (1976, David and Albert Maysles).... May 1-3: “It Should Happen to You” (1954, George Cukor) and “The Solid Gold Cadillac” (1956, Richard Quine).... May 4: “Speedy” (1928, Ted Wilde; silent) and “The Bowery” (1933, Raoul Walsh).... May 5: “My Sister Eileen” (1942, Alexander Hall) and “A Night to Remember” (1943, Richard Wallace).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films based on Patricia Highsmith novels. April 23 at 2:30 and April 25 at 5: “The Cry of the Owl” (1987, Claude Chabrol; in French).... April 23 at 6: “Strangers on a Train” (1951, Alfred Hitchcock).... April 24 at 2:30 and April 25 at 2: “Purple Noon” (†).... April 24 at 6: “Deep Water” (1981, Michel Deville; in French).... ¶ April 23 and April 30 at 6: Two different programs in a series about the history of 8-mm. films and videos in the United States.... ¶ April 23 at 6:30 and April 24 at 3: “Power: One River Two Nations” (1996, Magnus Isacsson and Glen Salzman).... ¶ A program of films from Finland; in Finnish, with English subtitles. April 24 at 6 and May 3 at 1: “Juha” (1937, Nyrki Tapiovaara).... April 24 at 8 and May 2 at 3: “Drifting Clouds” (1997, Aki Kaurismäki).... April 25 at 3: “Rally” (1970, Risto Jarva).... April 25 at 6: “The Collector” (1996, Auli Mantila).... April 26 and May 2 at 1: “People in the Summer Night” (1948, Valentin Vaala).... April 26 at 3 and May 2 at 5: “Tigrero: A Film That Was Never Made” (1994, Mika Kaurismäki).... May 1 at 6 and May 3 at 3: “Stolen Death” (1938, Tapiovaara).... May 1 at 8: “Take Care of Your Scarf, Tatjana” (1994, Aki Kaurismäki).... ¶ April 24 at 8: “Manhattan Madness” (1916, Allan Dwan; silent) and “Manhandled” (1924, Dwan; silent).... ¶ April 26 at 2: “Laura” (1944, Otto Preminger).... ¶ April 26 at 5: “Anatomy of a Murder” (†).... ¶ April 27 at 2:30 and April 28 at 6: “Mr. Arkadin” (1955, Orson Welles).... ¶ April 27 at 6 and April 30 at 2:30: “True Confessions” (1981, Ulu Grosbard).... ¶ April 28 at 2 and April 30 at 6: “Reversal of Fortune” (1990, Barbet Schroeder).... ¶ A program of films starring Alain Delon; most in French, with English subtitles. May 1 at 2:30 and May 2 at 5: “Any Number Can Win” (1963, Henri Verneuil).... May 1 at 6 and May 3 at 5: “Pour la Peau d’un Flic” (1981, Delon).... May 1 at 8 and May 4 at 2:30: “Our Story” (1984, Bertrand Blier).... May 2 at 2 and May 4 at 6: “Casanova’s Return” (1992, Edouard Niermans).... May 3 at 5: “The Eclipse” (1962, Michelangelo Antonioni; in Italian, with no English subtitles).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A program of films from Africa. April 22 at 2 and 9:30: “Love Brewed in an African Pot” (1980, Kwah Anash; Ghana).... April 22 at 4:20: “When the Stars Meet the Sea” (1996, Raymond Rajaonarivelo; Madagascar).... April 22 at 6: “Rouch in Reverse” (1995, Manthia Diawara; United Kingdom, United States, and Mali).... April 22 at 8:10 and April 23 at 4:30: “Rostov Luanda” (1997, Abderrahmane Sissako; France).... April 23 at 2: Three short films by Jean-Marie Teno, from Cameroon.... April 23 at 9 and April 24 at 2: “Sango” (1997, Obafemi Bandele Lasode; Nigeria).... ¶ April 23 at 6:30: “Too Tired to Die” (1997, Wonsuk Chin).... ¶ A program of films from Argentina; in Spanish, with English subtitles. April 24 at 6:30 and April 26 at 8:30: “Ashes of Paradise” (1997, Marcelo Piñeyro).... April 24 at 9:15: “Hide and Seek” (1976, Leopoldo Torre Nilsson).... April 25 at 2 and April 27 at 4 and 8:15: “God Will Reward You” (1948, Luis Cesar Amadori).... April 25 at 4:15 and April 27 at 2 and 6:15: “Madreselva” (1938, Amadori).... April 25 at 6:15: “Eva Perón” (1996, Juan Desanzo).... April 25 at 8:15: “Chronicle of a Lonely Child” (1965, Leonardo Favio).... April 26 at 4:30: “Nobleza Gaucha” (1915, Humberto Cairo, Ernesto Gunche, and Educardo Martinez de la Pera; silent).... April 26 at 6:15: “The Sleep of Heroes” (1998, Sergio Renan).... April 29 at 2, 6, and 9:15 and April 30 at 4 and 7:45: “End of Innocence” (1956, Nilsson).... April 29 at 4 and 7:30 and April 30 at 2, 6, and 9:15: “The Fall” (1959, Nilsson).... May 2 at 4 and 8:30 and May 3 at 5:40: “Wake Up Love” (1996, Eliseo Subiela).... May 2 at 6:10 and May 3 at 7:40: “Martin” (1997, Adolfo Aristarain).... May 3 at 4 and May 5 at 6:15: “Return of the Nest” (1938, Leopoldo Torre Rios).... May 4 at 2 and 6:15 and May 5 at 3:50: “Three Times Ana” (1961, David Jose Kohon).... May 4 at 4:15 and 8:30 and May 5 at 2: “Gaucho” (1953, Lucas Demare).... May 5 at 7:50: “Yellow Flowers in the Window” (1961, Victor Jorge).... ¶ Weekend showings for children. May 2-3 at 2: “Imuhar: A Legend” (1997, Jacques Dubuisson; in French).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—April 26 at 2: “The Love Light” (1921, Frances Marion; silent).... April 26 at 4:30: “The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty” (1927, Esther Shub; silent).... May 2 at 2: “Little Fugitive” (1953, Ray Ashley, Morris Engel, and Ruth Orkin).... May 2 at 4:30: “Weddings and Babies” (1960, Engel).... May 3 at 2: “True Love” (1989, Nancy Savoca).... May 3 at 4:30: “Household Saints” (1993, Savoca).

Opening April 24, Mark Wahlberg and China Chow in “The Big Hit.”

GARY PANTER

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—April 24-May 3: The 4th Avignon/New York Film Festival, ten days of French and American independent films (including a film tribute to Samuel Fuller), seminars, and discussions.... ¶ May 5 at 12:30 and 6:30: “Black Thursday” (1974, Michel Mitrani; in French).... ¶ May 5 at 3:30 and 9: “Rivesaltes Journal” (1996, Jacqueline Veuve; in French).

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—A series of films that have won or been nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film. April 28 at 7: “Amarcord” (1974, Federico Fellini; in Italian).... April 28 at 9:15: “Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown” (†).... May 5 at 7: “Kagemusha” (1980, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese).

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3587)—A festival of early Chinese films; silent, with English intertitles. April 22 and April 25: “A String of Pearls” (1926, Li Zeyuan) and “The Peach Girl” (1931, Bu Wancang).... April 24 and April 26: “Tale of the Western Chamber” (1927, Hou Yao) and “Blood of Love” (1932, Sun Yu).... April 29 and May 2: “Spring in the South” (1932, Cai Chusheng) and “Wild Rose” (1932, Sun Yu).... May 1 and May 3: “Daybreak” (1933, Sun Yu) and “Spring Silkworms” (1933, Cheng Bugao).

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). April 26 at 7, the feature will be “I Am a Camera” (†); on May 3 at 7, “The Swimmer” (1968, Frank Perry).

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through April 30: “Gideon’s Trumpet” (1980, Robert Collins). (Showings Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays at 2 and 4; Thursdays and Fridays at 2, 4, and 6.)

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—April 22 at 6:15 and 10:15: “Asya’s Happiness” (1967, Andrei Konchalovsky; in Russian).... April 22-24 at 8:15, April 25-26 at 10:30, April 27-29 at 8, and April 30 at 6:30: “Pereira Declares” (1995, Roberto Faenza; in Italian).... April 23 at 8 and 10, April 24 at 6 and 8, April 25 at 3 and 10, April 26 at 4 and 10, April 29 at 6, and April 30 at 9: “Bullet on a Wire” (1997, Jim Sikora).... April 25 at 2 and April 26 at 1: “Woman on the Beach” (1946, Jean Renoir).... April 25 at 4 and April 26 at 2:30: “The Satin Slipper” (1985, Manoël de Oliveira).... April 28 at 6: “The Neighbour” (1992, Götz Spielmann; in German).... April 28 at 5:45 and 10 and April 29 at 6:15 and 10:15: “A Nest of Gentlefolk” (1969, Konchalovsky; in Russian).... April 29 at 8 and 9:45 and April 30 at 7: “In the Land of Cinema Veterans: A Film Expedition Around Dziga Vertov” (1996, Thomas Tode and Ale Muñoz).... April 30 at 9:45: A program of short films by Bill Morrison.

Goethe-Institut New York, 1014 Fifth Ave., at 82nd St. (439-8700)—Filmed works of Bertolt Brecht. April 22 at 6:30: “Mother Courage and Her Children” (1961, Peter Palitzsch and Manfred Wekwerth; in German).... April 29 at 6:30: “My Name Is Bertolt Brecht: Exile in U.S.A.” (1989, Norbert Bunge and Christine Fischer-Defoy; in German).

The Screening Room, 54 Varick St.—April 22-26, The New York Women’s Film Festival, showing fifteen feature films along with short films and videos. (For information, call 465-3455.)

Advertisement

THE HOOT THEORY

My big sister always did things a little differently, even for a big sister. Oh sure, she excelled at most of the big sister annoyances. (I remain convinced that she habitually earned good grades in school just to make me look guilty by comparison.)

Then there was the time we used a piece of chalk on the sidewalk to play tic-tac-toe. My record was 0-14-2 before I retired to the house in tears.

But what really stands out is when we were kids and she got a new bicycle. She removed the white basket with the little pink plastic flowers and both fenders even before her first trip around the block. The local gang had set up a slaloming/racing course, and she wanted to compete, in both speed and style. It was immediately after her first victory that girls were forever banned from competing in future races. (That didn't stop me from borrowing her bike and winning a few races of my own.)

So it wasn't a real surprise when, at a family gathering, my brother-in-law showed up behind the wheel of a new Catera, only directing all inquiries to my sister. "It's hers; she bought it." Figures.

Me and my brethren grilled her relentlessly. Traction control? Speed-sensitive steering? ABS? (Yes, yes, yes.) What kinda horsepower? ("24-valve V6 with 200 h.p.") Apparently she knows her stuff.

She proceeded to regale her audience with a discussion of sodium-filled exhaust valves and how it provides Catera with more horses. Male pride had us all nodding knowingly; we could all privately consult one of the car magazines for an explanation later.

Even a simple inquiry about Catera's inside prompted a lengthy response. Something about the driver's seat "hip points" being raised for the optimum driving position. I guess I should have taken notes.

What's it like on the road? ("A hoot.") Maybe not the most descriptive of words, but there was a decided twinkle in her eye that said volumes.

What I needed was a chance to investigate this "hoot" theory a little more closely. The forgotten dinner rolls provided the perfect opportunity to volunteer for a store run.

"I think your car is blocking mine," I slyly told my sister. "No it's not," she said, as she tossed me the keys. (She still can be annoying.)

But as far as Catera being a "hoot" to drive? Well, she was right about that.

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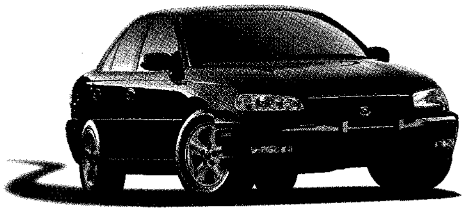

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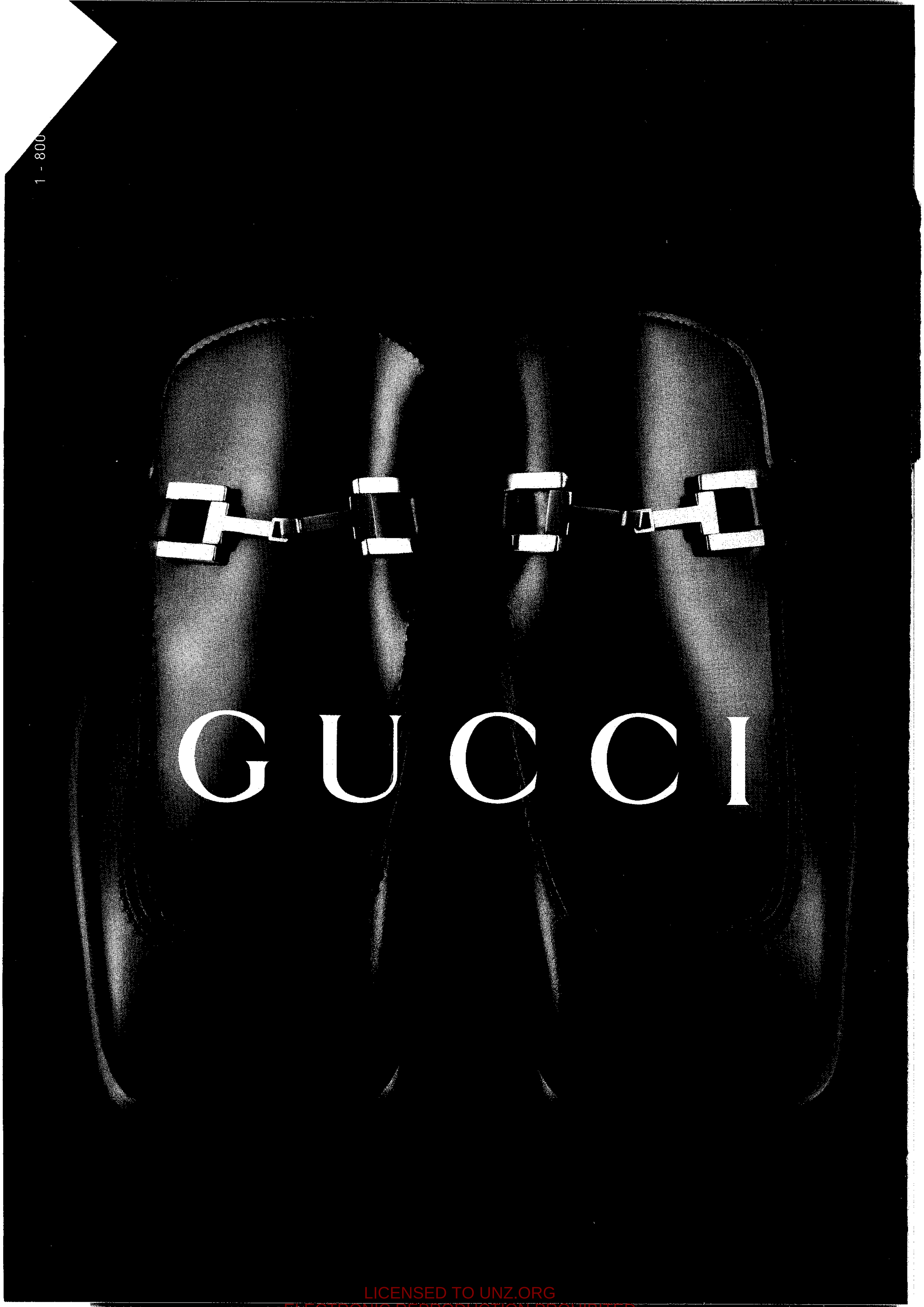

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THE
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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

THE BOARDS

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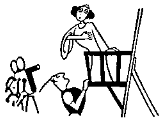
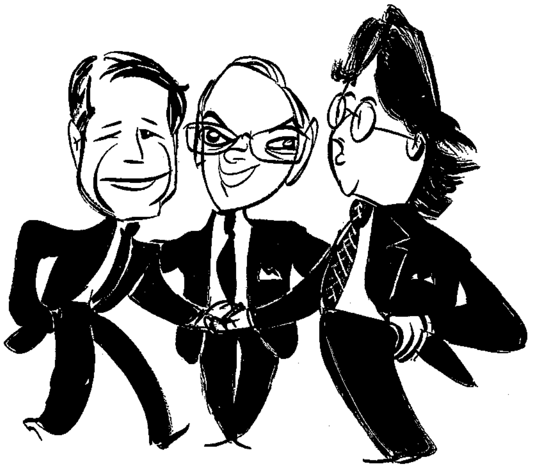


The way the press has treated it, you would think Time Warner had merged with Disney. When Michael Ovitz announced last week that he was investing twenty million dollars in Livent, the theatrical production company that has achieved more acclaim for its productions of "Ragtime" and "Show Boat" than for the strength of its balance sheet, it made the front page of the *Times*, a level of attention that baffled even theatre people.

"One day, the *Times* puts a seventy-billion-dollar deal on the front page, and then a twenty-*million*-dollar deal?" Bernard Gersten, the executive producer of Lincoln Center Theatre, said last week.

There are two reasons that everybody seems to care about the story, and neither has much to do with Livent. The first is Ovitz, who, since leaving his job as president of Disney just over a year ago, has been subjected to the kind of scrutiny that the press normally reserves for sex scandals. The Livent deal marks the symbolic return of Ovitz to the entertainment business, after an odd path that culminated, a couple of weeks ago, in reports that the executive who was once called the most powerful man in Hollywood had begun a new career developing shopping malls.

The Livent deal has also attracted attention because it involves a man who did not have to be rescued from Hollywood or shopping malls, who has spent the last twenty-five years quietly putting together entertainment deals from an office on Park Avenue, and who has suddenly found himself among the most powerful people in the American theatre. Everything changed for Roy Furman a few Sunday mornings ago, when he was sitting beside the pool at his Palm Beach apartment and the phone rang. The call was from Ovitz, whom Furman and his investment-banking firm, Furman Selz, had been wooing as a potential investor in Livent. Though Ovitz was interested in the company, he was wary of the management track record of Garth Drabinsky, Livent's flamboyant co-founder, who had appeared to be overwhelmed by the triple responsibility of producing shows, building theatres, and operating a large business. Ovitz had told Furman that he would consider investing in Livent only if new management could be brought in. Ovitz wanted someone with stature in both the business world and the cultural community, and no one who seemed right was turning up.


Michael Ovitz, Roy Furman, and Garth Drabinsky

Ovitz began the Sunday conversation, Furman recalls, by saying, " 'O.K., I've found the guy: he's well known in both New York and Los Angeles, he knows how to do a deal, he is known in New York social circles, and he has creative discernment.' I said, 'That's fabulous, who is he?' 'Well, there's one problem—he probably won't want to do it,' Michael said. 'It's you.'

"My first reaction was to say, 'No, that's ridiculous,' " Furman told me the other day, sitting in his office at Furman Selz. "But then Michael began his work, and by the end of the conversation I said I would think about it. A couple of days later, he told me that he'd known right at that moment that he had me."

Furman, who is fifty-eight, had no reason to make such a radical change in his life. Having recently sold Furman Selz for six hundred million dollars, he had plenty of money and a secure position in his field. It didn't matter that his name was not as familiar as Ovitz's or Drabinsky's, since Furman is one of those people who are trusted by famous people, which can be better than being famous yourself.

Yet Furman, whose specialty is media and entertainment, has never been a conventional investment banker. A trim, energetic man, he loves theatre, film, and music with the intensity of an undergraduate. He is the sort of man who is able to say, without irony, "I still get a thrill whenever I go to the theatre. I turn to my wife as the lights go down and say, like a mantra, 'Isn't this great?' My wife has heard that so many times she just cuts me off in the middle and says, 'I know, Roy.' "

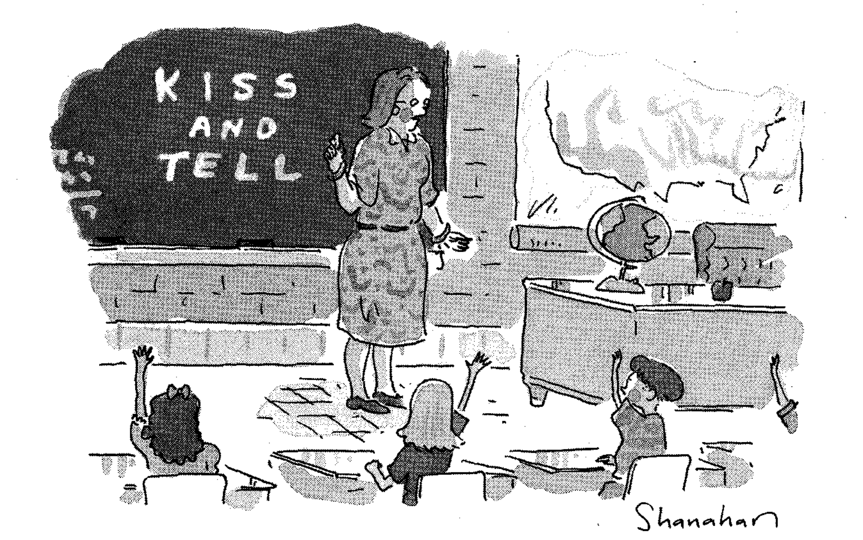
Furman is a curious combination of intensity and whimsy. When his close friend Michael Lynne, the president of New Line Cinema, and his wife built a house near the Furmans' in East Hampton, Furman spent nine months secretly recording the construction process, including interviews with the architects and contractors, and presented the video to the Lynnes when they moved in. After the fortieth-birthday party of a friend who said she hadn't had such a good time since she was six years old and had pink cupcakes, Furman ordered up a batch of pink cupcakes and delivered

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

them to her himself the next morning.

Above all, Furman is an unabashed fan. He has been raving to friends about "Ragtime" since he first saw a workshop production of it in Toronto—"It is a work for the ages," he says—and he has taken a paternal interest in Drabinsky, who will remain with Livent as creative director. "I love this firm—my name is on the door," Furman says. "But it's amazing what you find when you get involved in something new like this. It's more kinetic, more challenging; it's like exploding your mind."

—PAUL GOLDBERGER



"Who'd like to go first?"

LIVING LARGE

In case you were wondering, Paul Bunyan is alive and well.

SIZE certainly does matter. So James Cameron recently reminded us, and, for anyone who has forgotten, the ad campaign for "Godzilla," this summer's biggest movie, makes the point again. But it's not just any size that matters: it's mega-ultra-super-extra-large—a size for which we're running out of prefixes. With the recent wave of mammoth bank mergers (not to mention Bertelsmann's deal to acquire Random House), and the opening of superstores all over Manhattan, we've fully embraced gigantism. Bigger isn't just better; it's becoming essential. That appears to be the logic of BankAmerica, which is combining with NationsBank, and of Travelers, which is joining forces with Citicorp—the two biggest mergers in history. Enormous size, the banks' C.E.O.s say, will allow them to lower costs and provide better service. The consolidations are pioneering an age of financial superstores, the banking equivalent of one-stop shopping at the Price Club, where you can load up your gargantuan Ford Expedition sport utility vehicle with gigantic cartons of double-thick paper towels and, on the way home, stop to get your fries super-sized at McDonald's.

We're living in an era of dizzying size inflation, of disproportionate portions. Last week's extra-large Coca-Cola at the movies is today's medium. King Kong was a runt compared to Godzilla. Chuck Close's massive portraits make Lucian Freud's look like miniatures. The fortunes of cyber-billionaires like Bill Gates and Paul Allen are greater than the assets of most large banks of only twenty-five years ago. The three sizes now offered by Starbucks are tall, grande, and venti. Ask for a small (or would that be piccolo?) and the counter folk look at you as if you were from another planet: tall is small.

So many things these days appear as if they'd been injected with the human growth hormone (which, as it happens, is the latest and trendiest anti-aging potion). The oversized pants favored by rappers and now affected by suburban boys everywhere were once worn only by clowns at the circus. Platform shoes are as big as shoeboxes.

Fashion may favor the new bigness, but nature tends to frown on immensity. One theory of why dinosaurs became extinct is that they just grew too large to support themselves on the available flora and fauna—and there weren't any drive-through super-size takeout places at the corner. The plot of Billy Crystal's new comedy, "My Giant," revolves around the side-splitting premise that real-life giants are, in fact, too big for their bodies to function properly. Their hearts give out early.

There probably will be redeeming economies of scale to all these super deals and mega mergers, but there is also a sizable serving of vanity. What were the pyramids but jumbo tokens of a Pharaoh's ego? "Bigger is indeed better," Hugh L. McColl, who will be the chairman of the new BankAmerica, told reporters. And for him it undoubtedly is.

"Any intelligent fool can make things bigger," E. F. Schumacher, the author of "Small Is Beautiful," once wrote. Only last week, a team of British cooks near Bristol baked the world's largest meat pie, weighing in at ten and a quarter tons, the equivalent of three elephants. The meat took so long to thaw that the pie was finished too late in the day to sell, and most of it had to be thrown away. Yes, they did it, but why would anyone want to?

Perhaps the recent discoveries about the size of the universe have made our imaginations seem puny. When you find out that you are a speck on a planet in a solar system that is only one of fifty billion other galaxies, it's easy to feel insignificant. Things everywhere have grown larger, but our lives seem somehow smaller. Why not get that Chevy Suburban and feel a little more secure in the cosmos?

—RICHARD STENGEL

PLAY IT, SAM

Visitors to the Ritz bar are crying into their cocktails.

AFTER performing "Candle in the Wind 1997" at the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, Elton John swore that he would never again play the song in public. That declaration, though, hasn't discouraged others from doing so, including one Claude Povillon, the pianist in the Bar Vendôme at the Ritz Hotel in Paris. When, on a

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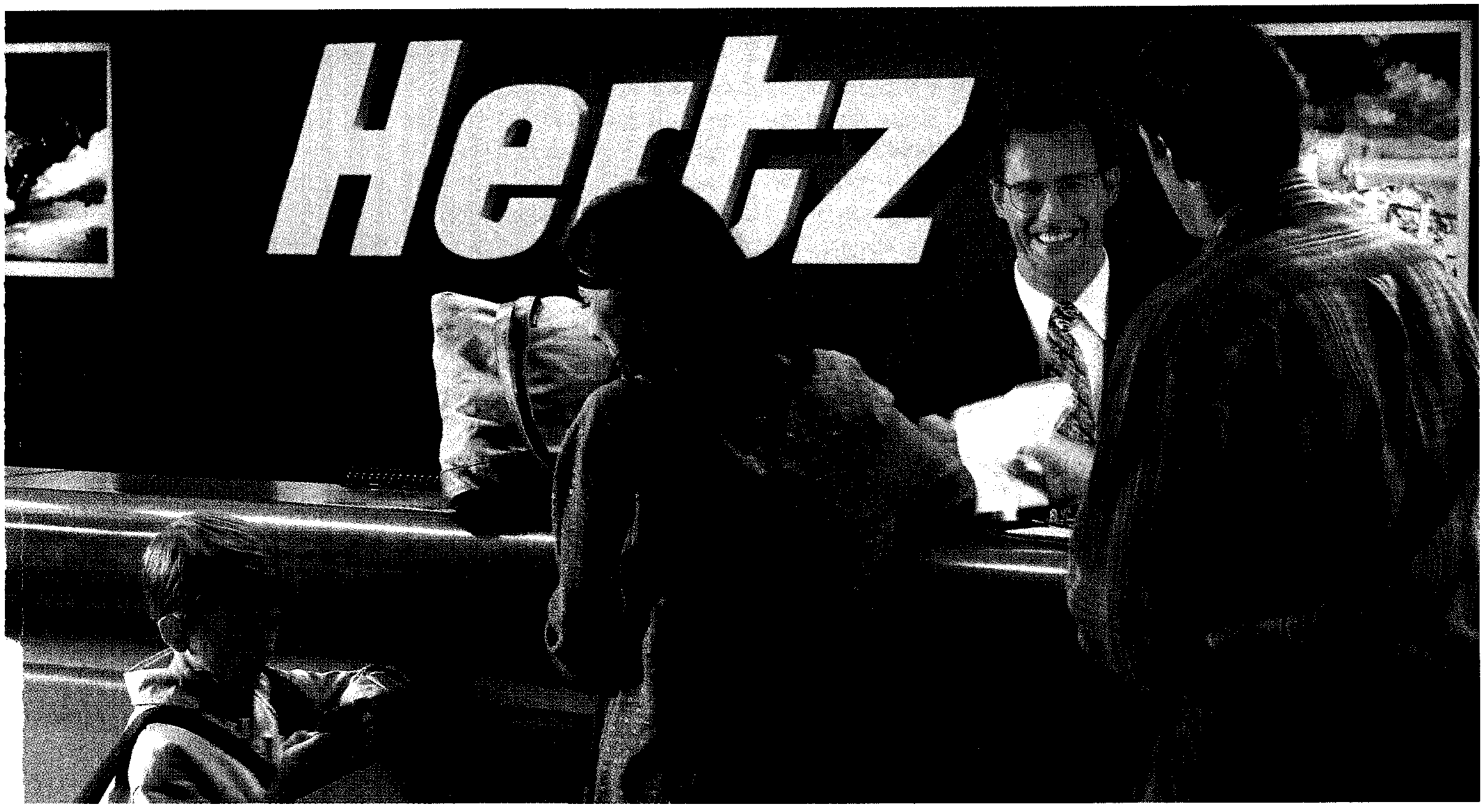

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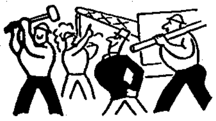
recent Saturday evening, Povillon segued from his unremarkable tinkling of easy-listening tunes into the John tragi-hit, a surge of disbelief—he can't be? he *is!*—went through the room, as at least some guests sat bolt upright, trying not to choke on their cocktails or gawk around the room too obviously to see if others were also choking on their cocktails. Things got even more unsettling when, at the end of the tune, some of the bar's patrons began—they can't be? they *are!*—to applaud.

A spokeswoman for the hotel expressed surprise that the song had been played at the Ritz, which is owned by Mohamed Al Fayed, the father of Dodi Fayed, who was killed in the same car crash as Diana after the couple had dinner at the hotel last August. She said that Povillon doesn't play the tune as part of his usual set, but that it had been requested by a guest. "In the evening, he does get a lot of requests," the spokeswoman explained.

"God Save the Queen" for another night, perhaps? —REBECCA MEAD

MASTER BUILDER

A humble architect takes top honors.



RENZO PIANO likes to think of himself as an unconventional architect, or at least an unconventional famous architect. That's because he likes to spend his time designing buildings, not inventing theories or licensing his name for teakettles or sheets. So he was surprised the other day to receive a telephone call from New York informing him that he had just won the Pritzker Prize, the hundred-thousand-dollar award that is the architectural profession's highest honor. Not that Piano, who is sixty years old and lives in Genoa, is a recluse. He first achieved fame in the mid-seventies, when he and Richard Rogers turned the Place Beaubourg in Paris into the world's most extravagant frolic of high-tech architecture. He has always been perceived as an architect's architect, admired by students, fellow-practitioners, and a handful of very smart clients, but out of the loop of architectural celebrity. He is not a household word, like I. M. Pei, Philip Johnson, and Frank Gehry, to name a few previous Pritzker winners.

Piano does not even look the part of a famous architect. His full gray beard gives him a rabbinical air, and his slightly dishevelled dress reminds you that not all Italians wear Armani or Prada. His manner is soft, his accented English thoughtful. Though definitely low-key, Piano is hardly self-deprecating. He once told an interviewer that he thought he got many of his jobs because clients believe he's less neurotic than most architects, and he was probably right. His fundamental reasonableness, he believes, comes from his father, who was a building contractor; Piano was brought up to think of architecture in terms of its physical realities—how buildings are constructed, and how they feel when they are finished. He is less interested in theory than in intuition, less interested in art than in engineering.

"Thirty years ago, when I started making my first structures, it was like playing, like a child playing with sand on the beach," he recalled the other day. "My first buildings were exploring the poetry of natural light, and it was totally innocent, not self-conscious. I was taking physical pleasure from playing with the sand."

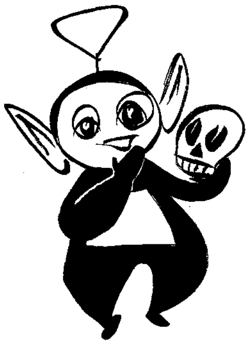
Piano's first major commission in the United States was the Menil Collection, the powerful yet delicate museum in Houston completed in 1986 for the great patron Dominique de Menil, a woman who was very much like Piano himself—thoughtful, understated, dismissive of cant and capable of the sharpest perception. Piano describes her as "obstinate, but it was a sublime obstination." The success of the Menil led to the widely acclaimed Beyeler museum, near Basel, which he recently finished, and then came another American commission, to expand the Harvard Art Museums.

In each project, technology is at the service of a light, lyrical, humanistic vision. "I feel grateful to European culture, because it has helped me mix together the art of doing things with the pleasure of making things," he said. "And the Pritzker Prize is really great, but it is unexpected. You start as the son of a builder, and then you find out you are an architect." —PAUL GOLDBERGER

POSTCARD FROM STRATFORD

Tinky Winky and Laa Laa are nudging Macbeth off the stage.

OF all the odd side effects triggered by the success of "Teletubbies"—the controversial British TV show, now airing on PBS, that is aimed at the pre-speech set but has become a cult among club kids—none has been more surprising than the demographic shift it has sparked in the Stratford-Upon-Avon tourist trade. Where once all was blue-haired matrons, now toddlers roam. As one local put it, "Tubby or not Tubby, that is the question." Stratford, the picturesque village that is home to all things Shakespearean, is also home to the Teletubbies production company, Ragdoll, and, more important, to the Ragdoll gift shop, which sells Teletubbies merchandise not generally available in stores. Want the special Teletubby doll that opens its arms when you press its belly and clings to whatever you want? Go to Stratford. Want to write a letter to Laa Laa or Tinky Winky and post it in their very own mailbox? Stratford. Want "Hamlet"? Try Barnes & Noble.



According to the South Warwickshire tourist board, last summer the volunteers who make up the Shakespeare Country Visitor Information Patrollers reported an overwhelming volume of Teletubbies-related questions. Barry Wood, the retail director of the Ragdoll company and husband of the Tubbies' creator, Anne Wood, says thousands of out-of-towners make the pilgrimage every week: "Once, a family came up from Cornwall, and then, after staying a few hours, asked if there was anything else to see in Stratford."

As to how the Royal Shakespeare Company feels about its new competition, Adrian Noble, the company's artistic director, is diplomatically silent. However, according to Ragdoll's Mr. Wood, "The R.S.C. did ask if there was anything we could do to help promote their American tour." —VANESSA FRIEDMAN

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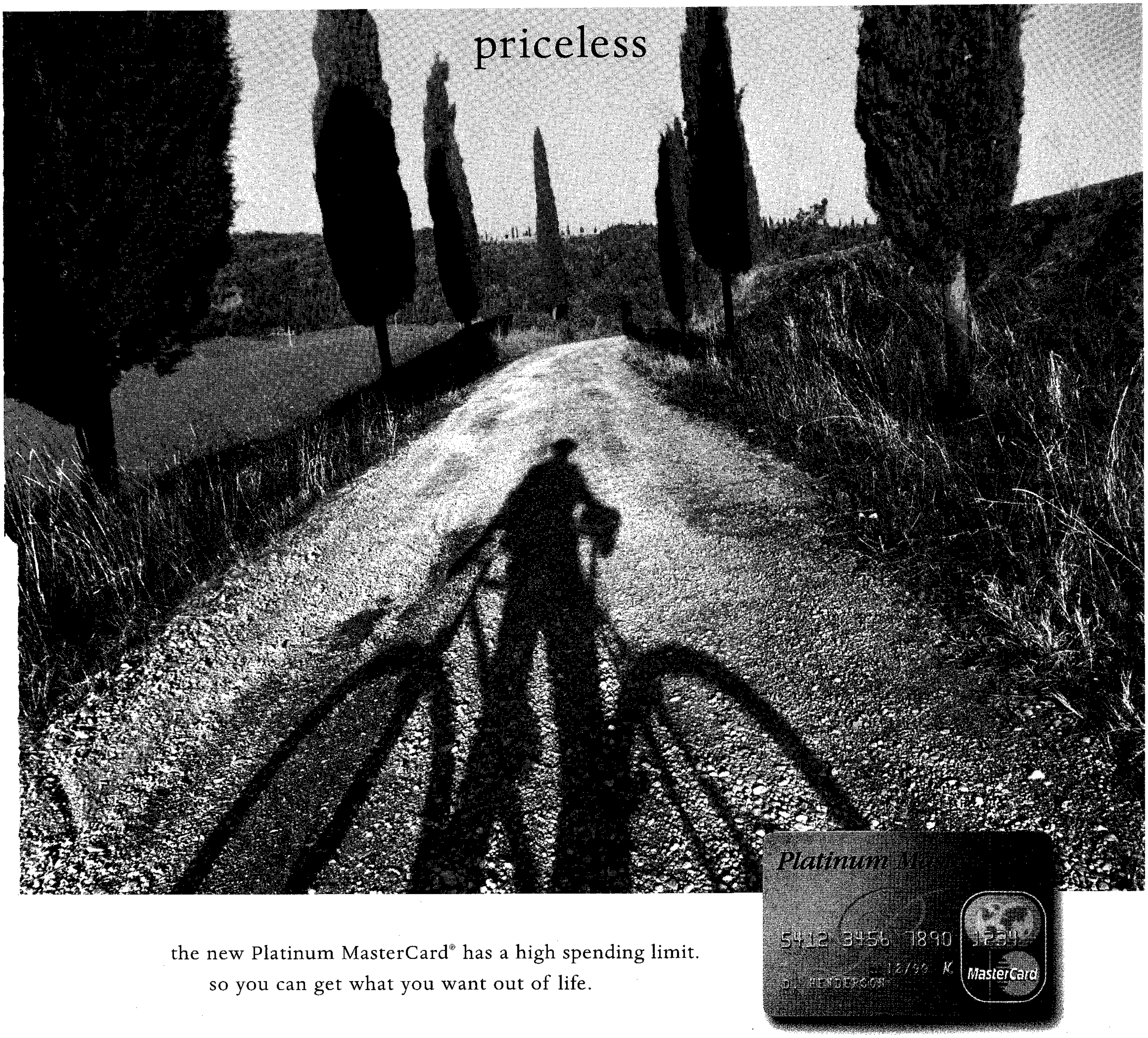

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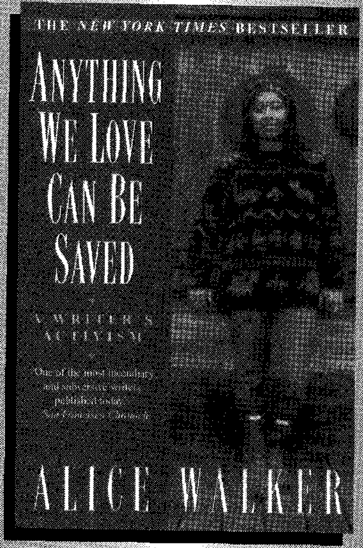

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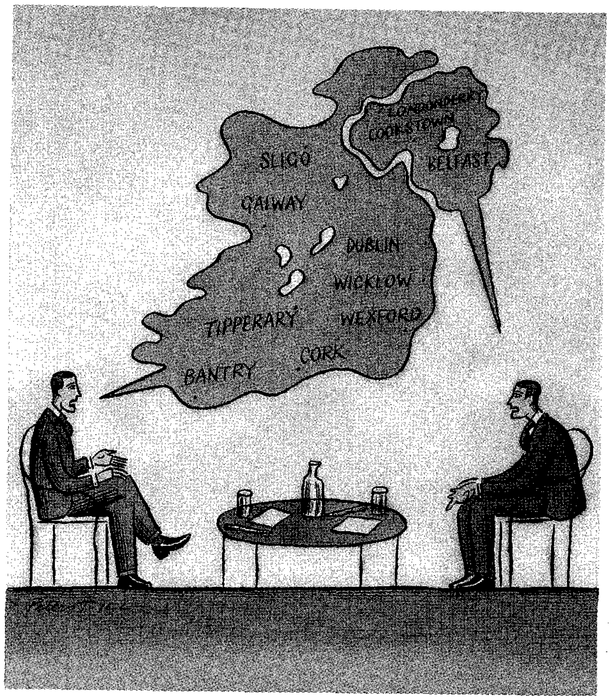
LETTER FROM NORTHERN IRELAND

THE MEANINGS OF UNION

Taking the trouble out of the Troubles.

BY FINTAN O'TOOLE

Two days before the deadline for a peace agreement in Northern Ireland, on Tuesday, April 7th, the prospects seemed suddenly bleak. The leaders of the largest Protestant party, the Ulster Unionists, appeared to be in a panic. They had just been given a draft of the final agreement drawn up by the chairman of the talks, former United States Senator George Mitchell. Almost everything in the draft had been discussed and negotiated between them in endless detail for nearly two years, but on seeing all of it together, in writing, they realized how strange and new it was. Had they really agreed to this? The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, flying to Belfast within hours to try to rescue the deal, summed up the trouble: “The problem with the situation . . . is that words matter. Every word matters.”



To make peace, the British and Irish governments had to act more like poets than like politicians.

By the afternoon of Good Friday, Blair and Bertie Ahern, the Irish Prime Minister, along with the other participants, had finally come up with the right words to put before the people of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, and on May 22nd they will vote on these words in a referendum. On offer is an end to a conflict that is thirty years old, has killed more than thirty-two hundred people, and has injured some thirty-seven thousand others. But in return for peace the people of both parts of Ireland will have to give up a comfort that most Europeans take for granted: a fixed sense of where their nation begins and ends. They will be asked to accept a way of belonging that is unlike anything they, or anyone else in Europe, have ever experienced.

Since 1985, the British and the Irish have been slowly changing the way they talk about their ancient quarrel. The old quip—English, of course—was that every time the Irish Question was thought to be solved the Irish changed the question. Now, however, it seems that the two sides have come to see that changing the question might actually be the way to solve it.

The old question was “To whom does Northern Ireland belong—Ireland or Britain?” The old answer was “To whoever can seize or hold it by force.” The new question is “Can people at the end of the twentieth century live without knowing that they belong, once and for all, to a well-defined nation?” The peace deal is based on the belief that the answer is yes.

In order to get that answer, the British and the Irish governments have had to blunt the edges of some very sharp words. In a series of texts, accumulated

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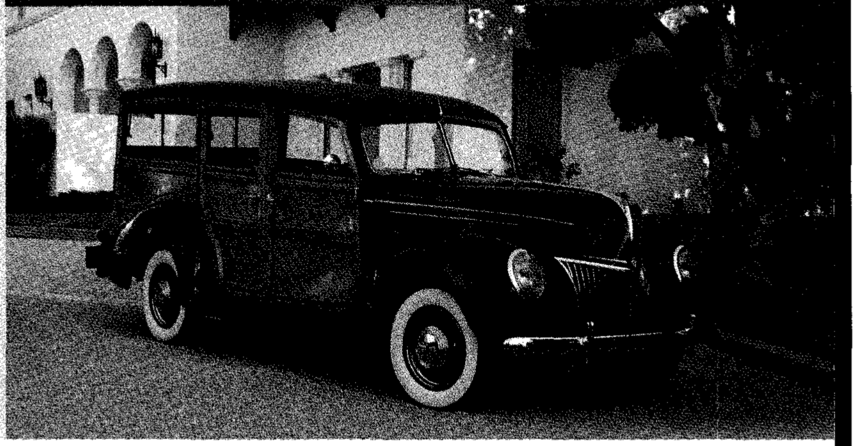

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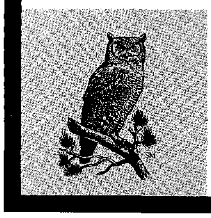

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NATION

IN James Joyce's "Ulysses," Leopold Bloom, a Hungarian-Irish Jew, sits in a Dublin pub. The talk takes a political turn. Bloom complains that the history of the world is full of persecution, which perpetuates "national hatred among nations." He is asked, "But do you know what a nation means?" He answers, "A nation is the same people living in the same place." A wise guy remarks that he himself must be a nation, because he has been living in the same place for the past five years. Over the derisive laughter of his fellow-drinkers, Bloom adds, "Or also living in different places." A fiery anti-Semitic patriot then says, "What is your nation if I may ask?" "Ireland," says Bloom. "I was born here. Ireland." In the uproar that follows, amid a cry for his murder, the definer of nations is chased out of the pub.

Bloom's "or also" has sounded throughout twentieth-century Europe, and has usually been followed by the chasing of someone or other off the premises. Even in its most cosmopolitan manifestation, the European Union, Europe is meant to be made up of sovereign nation-states, each containing "the same people living in the same place."

Yet there are also anomalies, where the same people live in different places, and where different peoples live in the same place. There are people on the wrong side of national borders, like the Hungarians of Transylvania, who find themselves in Romania, or the Albanians of Kosovo Province, who are stuck in Serbia. There are nations that do not fit neatly into any recognized state, like the Basques and the Catalans. There are regions, like Northern Italy, Scotland, and the Flemish part of Belgium, that joined larger states more or less voluntarily but have generated demands for separation. And there is, of course, Northern Ireland, a small space shared by people who can't agree on what nation they belong to.

Where do nations exist? The answer is to be found in the peace deal: nations exist in the mind. The peace deal will allow the people in Northern Ireland to be whatever they think they are—British or Irish, or both. If you want to be British, you can take comfort in the fact that, formally, the place will still be a part of the United Kingdom. If you want to be Irish, you can wave the Irish flag, carry an Irish passport, and argue for a United Ireland without being seen as a traitor. Uttering Bloom's "or also" will not have you chased off the premises.

NORTHERN IRELAND

WHAT is it? Those Catholics who don't want to concede that it is a separate state call it the North of Ireland. Many Protestants, not wanting to concede that the state is part of an island known as Ireland, call it Ulster—an ancient province of which it is but a part. The evasions are eloquent. Northern Ireland is a place that no one quite wanted.

In the early twentieth century, there were two views of what should happen. Most Irish Protestants wanted all of Ireland to remain, as it had been since 1800, a part of the United Kingdom, ruled from London. Most Irish Catholics wanted all of Ireland to become an independent state, ruled from Dublin. The creation, in 1920, of Northern Ireland—made up of the six Northern counties, where the Protestants were a majority—was a reluctant compromise for both sides. Catholic-nationalist Ireland got its own state in the South, and Protestant-unionist Ireland got to stay in the United Kingdom.

But people don't live according to a map, and the emergence of a Northern Ireland left about half a million Catholics on the "wrong" side of the border. It also accomplished the virtually unique feat of establishing two ethnic groups each of which regarded itself as an endangered minority. The Protestants—a majority within Northern Ireland—saw themselves as a minority on the island as a whole. The Catholics—a majority on the island as a whole—were a minority in the North, and, for many decades, suffered systematic discrimination. Each group has the exaggerated communal loyalty of an encircled tribe.

For about seventy-five years, the United Kingdom pretended that Northern Ireland was a normal part of its territory. The Republic of Ireland, meanwhile, pretended that Northern Ireland was just a missing piece of its own territory. In a joint declaration, signed in December of 1993, each abandoned its pretense. Britain formally announced that it had "no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland." How radical was this announcement? Imagine that the President of the United States said that the nation no longer had a strategic or economic interest in Texas. After all, Northern Ireland is a part of the United Kingdom, just as Texas is a state in the United States. In the same document, the Republic of Ireland made a comparable announcement. It declared that it no longer had an interest in imposing "a united Ireland, in the absence of the freely given consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland."

The search for peace has turned a place that nobody quite wanted into a place that nobody claims. Northern Ireland has become a new kind of political space. Its people are in an extraordinary position—free to be anything they can agree to become. They have escaped from nations.

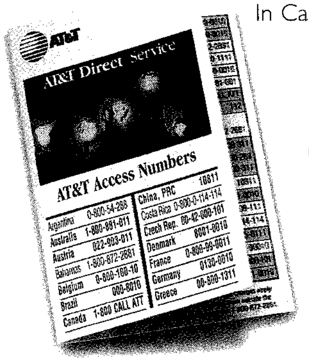
TERRORIST

WHERE is this potent word in any of the critical documents of the peace process? Nowhere.

Every previous effort to reach a solution in Northern Ireland assumed that terrorists were kept out of the talks. Before 1993, the British government didn't talk to terrorists—to either the Irish Republican Army (which has killed Protestants to make them want to be part of a United Ireland) or Loyalist paramilitaries (who have killed Catholics to make them grateful citizens of the United Kingdom). After 1993, the British government still didn't talk to terrorists, because it stopped calling them terrorists (or at least those of them who announced that they were no longer violent).

Witness the wardrobe of Gerry

(smooth operators)



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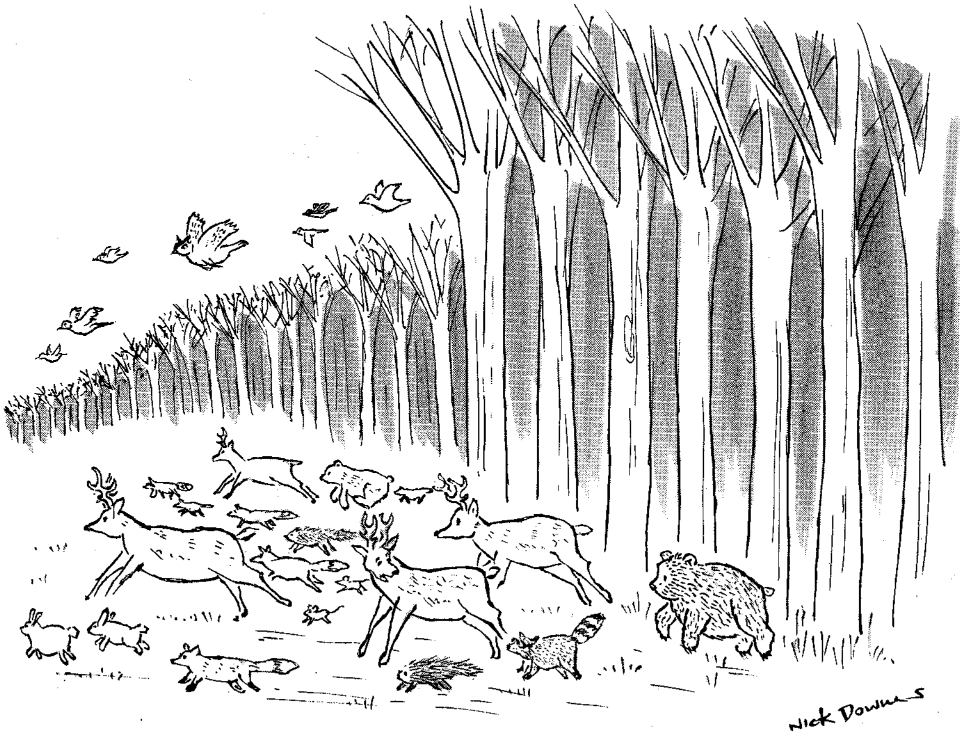

"What fire? We're fleeing eco-tourists."

Adams, the president of the Irish Republican Army's political wing, Sinn Féin. In the late nineteen-sixties, when the I.R.A. was regrouping, and Northern Ireland was descending into chaos, he wore the black beret, white shirt, dark tie, and sober suit of a severe, conservative Catholic revolutionary—an outfit that made I.R.A. men look, perhaps intentionally, rather like priests. In the early seventies, when he was reputed to be the leading figure in the Belfast I.R.A., he presumably wore the green army-surplus sweater and pants and the ski mask with holes for the eyes and mouth which the organization liked to sport in its propaganda displays. In the late seventies and the early eighties, as Adams pushed further into electoral politics, and as the I.R.A. kept on killing people, he assumed the long-haired, bearded, slightly scruffy look of a student radical in a duffel coat, which, as he sought even greater political respectability in the late eighties, then gave way to the tweed jacket and pipe of a lecturer at a down-at-the-heels provincial university. Finally, in the nineteen-nineties, he emerged from this dowdy chrysalis into the svelte suits of the international statesman. In his honor, the wags of West Belfast changed the traditional I.R.A. slogan "Tiocfaidh ár Lá" (Gaelic for "Our Day Will Come") to "Tiocfaidh Ar mani."

SELF-DETERMINATION

THE most important word in the lexicon of nations. It's what the American colonists wanted in 1776, and it's what the United Nations guarantees its members. But who gets to use it?

This is how the I.R.A. used it, following the bombing, on April 14, 1993, of the NatWest Tower, in London, which killed one person, injured more than forty, and caused nearly two billion dollars' worth of damage: in a letter to foreign-owned financial institutions in the City of London, the I.R.A. said that its bombs would continue until a settlement was reached that recognized "the fundamental and immutable right of the Irish people to national self-determination." The demand was clear: no more bombs, provided that you let us decide our own destiny.

Eventually, the British realized that the clever reply was "O.K." The next logical question was then: "What do the Irish people want?" Alas, they don't want what the I.R.A. wants. The Irish people don't want a United Ireland if the means of getting it is by such violent force that it leaves nearly a million Protestants in a state of even more violent resentment.

What John Major, then Britain's Prime Minister, formally agreed to, in an excruciatingly fastidious phrase (which has been repeated in the peace deal), was this: "That it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self-determination . . . to bring about a United Ireland, if that is their wish." In other words, Britain will leave Northern Ireland if and when Irish nationalists can get Ulster unionists to agree that it should.

Without actually altering anything, this formula brilliantly changed the question. The I.R.A. now has to ask not "How do we get the Brits out?" but "How do we get the Protestants to let them leave?" The answer is far from obvious, but "killing more Protestants" is clearly not it.

UNITED

IS it possible that "united" is used only by countries that are sharply divided? The United States before its Civil War; the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics before its dissolution; the United Kingdom now.

In 1981, Margaret Thatcher said, "Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom—as much as my constituency is." Her constituency, of course, was in the heart of England. Compare this with a remark by Tony Blair, made just two weeks after he was elected Prime Minister, in May, 1997: "Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, alongside England, Scotland and Wales. The Union binds the four parts of the United Kingdom together. I believe in the United Kingdom. I value the Union." So far, so good: this was what unionists wanted to hear. But then, as if he were merely completing the thought, Blair added, "I want to see a Union which reflects and accommodates diversity. I am against a rigid, centralised approach." The meaning of "union" had changed.

Three months later, Blair illustrated

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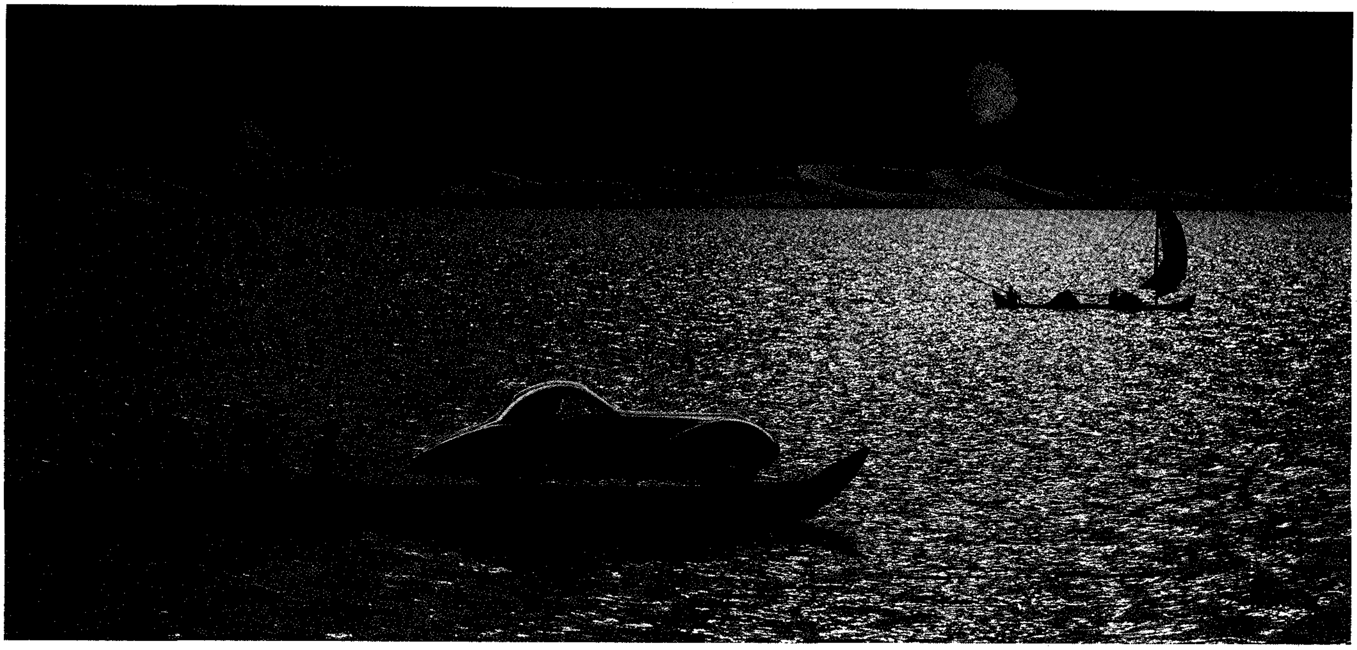

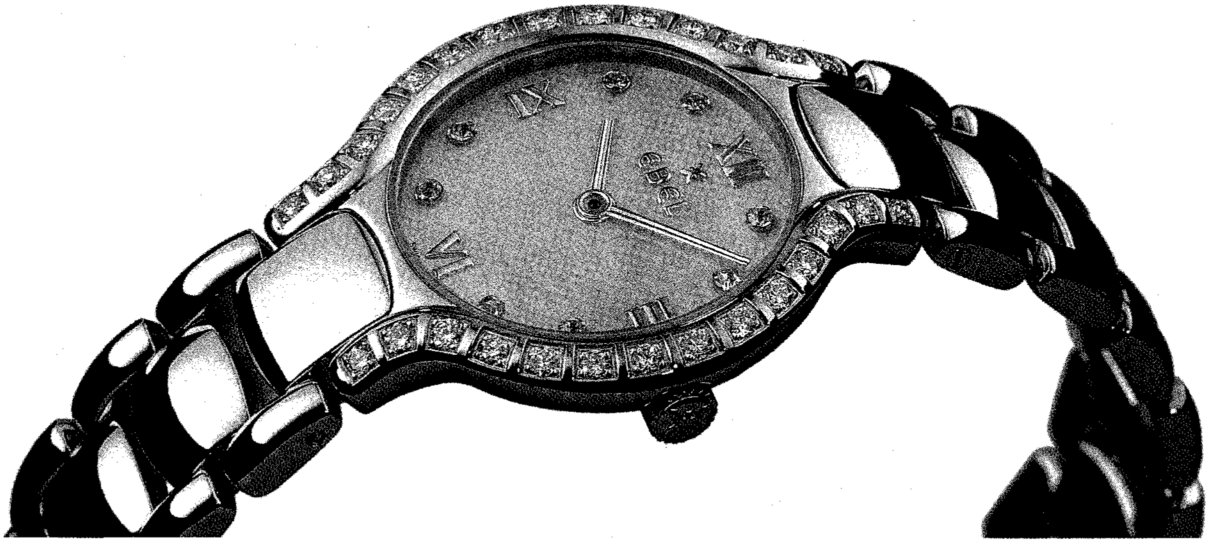

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his understanding of this new meaning by asking the Scots and the Welsh whether they wanted to elect their own legislatures. Both decided that they did. With elections scheduled to take place next year, the United Kingdom will begin to look increasingly less like a United Kingdom and more like a loose federation of different nations. Few people could be so naïve as to miss the implications this has for Northern Ireland. Peaceful, prosperous Scotland is being allowed to loosen its ties with the Union. Why, then, should Britain cling to Northern Ireland, where its soldiers are killed, which it subsidizes to the tune of five billion dollars a year, and which has tainted its reputation abroad by violence and misrule?

THESE ISLANDS

MARTIN McDONAGH'S play "The Cripple of Inishmaan" is currently being performed at the Public Theatre in New York. In one scene, a savage Irish girl asks her brother, "Do you want to play 'England versus Ireland'?" He's Ireland; she's England. She makes him close his eyes, and then she starts smashing eggs on his head. When he objects, she tells him, "There'll be worse casualties than eggy hair before Ireland's a nation once again."

The scene is a perfectly accurate picture of an Irish nationalist: the English will smash us on the head over and over again, because that's what the English do, unless they do something worse (and they'll do that, too). But it is also a picture offered in parody: the playwright is twenty-eight, and for most people of his generation that old-fashioned nationalist way of understanding the relationship between Ireland and England has now become laughable. It's a joke. What's more, it's an in-joke: the play was written for the Royal National Theatre of Great Britain by a Londoner of Irish parentage. Things have changed since another Irish playwright, Samuel Beckett, was asked if he was English and made the typically laconic reply "*Au contraire*." The peace deal involves an acceptance that "Irish" is not necessarily the opposite of "English" or "British."

I'm from the Irish Republic. I speak English. I grew up watching British television, reading British comics, following English football teams. I have cousins in London, in Manchester, and in Kent. When I want to imagine the stirring battles of my ancestors, I don't think of Irish rebellions. I remember my uncles, both from Dublin, who volunteered for the British Army during the Second World War and fought at El Alamein and in the D Day invasion of Normandy. I'm not, in any of this, untypical. The way politicians talk about "the Irish problem" lags behind the daily experience of ordinary people, in both the North and the South, who don't see the problem in the same terms and may not even see a problem. The peace deal is an effort to catch up.

The peace agreement proposes, among other things, the creation of a "British-Irish Council" that will bring together representatives of the British and Irish governments, and—when in place—the devolved institutions of Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. (It will also include representatives from the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.) What do you call the place that includes all these political entities? Nobody knows. So different circumlocutions are being tried out, like "the totality of relationships" and "the archipelago" and "these islands." The peace deal puts two of them together; this new place, evidently, is to be called "the totality of relationships among the peoples of these islands." It's hardly catchy. One suggested title for the new entity has been IONA—an acronym for Islands of the North Atlantic, and also the name of a holy island off Scotland which was settled by Irish monks. Is it possible that its sanctity will typify the joint British-Irish future?

CULTURE

CULTURE is the shape a place takes when it's inside the heads of its peoples: all the habits, attitudes, and values they take for granted. Except that in places like Northern Ireland what one side takes for granted is what the other takes as a threat. Culture is how you see yourself. In divided societies, culture is also how other people see you. In peaceful places, it's a matter of choice; in polarized places, the choice is between equally unpalatable alternatives.

Maurice Hayes, long the most influential Catholic public official in Northern Ireland, tells a story. As a young man, he was good at hurling, which is an ancient and sublimely skillful Irish game, enjoyed almost exclusively by Catholics. The game is played with a large wooden stick, longer and heavier than a baseball bat. In order to get to and from the hurling pitch, he had to pass through a Protestant area, but if he was seen with his stick in his hand he would be easily identified as a Catholic and perhaps beaten up.

He had, then, a choice. He could shove his stick down his trouser leg. In that case he would probably not be spotted, but if he was he would be unable to run very fast and would have no means of defending himself. Or he could brandish his stick openly, in which case he would almost certainly be attacked, but he would be able to run and fight. That, he suggested, was a good metaphor for culture in Northern Ireland: you could either conceal it and be rigidly defenseless or proclaim it and invite attack.

Stereotypes abound. Protestant culture is dour men in bowler hats marching in the parades of the Orangemen, a brotherhood dedicated to preserving their heritage; it is the Bible, the Queen, and supporting the Glasgow Rangers football club; it is small families and neat houses, shrewd shopkeepers, and the engineers who built the Titanic, in Belfast; it is the memory of great victories long ago. Catholic culture is hurling and Gaelic football, classes in the Irish language, and large families; it is nuns, publicans, the Pope, and the Glasgow Celtic football club; it is the memory of terrible defeats long ago.

Protestants pray on their feet, singing the praises of the Lord; Catholics pray on their knees, adoring the altar. Protestants play rugby; Catholics say the Rosary. Protestants have flute bands; Catholics dance jigs. Protestants are literal-minded, hardheaded, watchful, suspicious; Catholics are dreamy, feckless, exuberant, traitorous.

Most people find these stereotypes useless as descriptions of what they are but useful as descriptions of what they are *not*. John Taylor, the deputy leader of the Ulster Unionists, and an important figure in the peace talks, once defined his identity thus: "I'm an Ulsterman, not an Irishman—I don't jig at crossroads or play Gaelic football or speak Irish. We've got two races on this island." Most Irish Catholics don't do any of these things, either, but that's not the point. The difficulty of escaping these assumptions is summed up in a Belfast joke: "Are you a Catholic or a Protestant?" "Neither. I'm a Buddhist." "Are you a Catholic Buddhist or a Protestant Buddhist?"

Yet, in the last census taken in Northern Ireland, nineteen per cent of the population did not define themselves as

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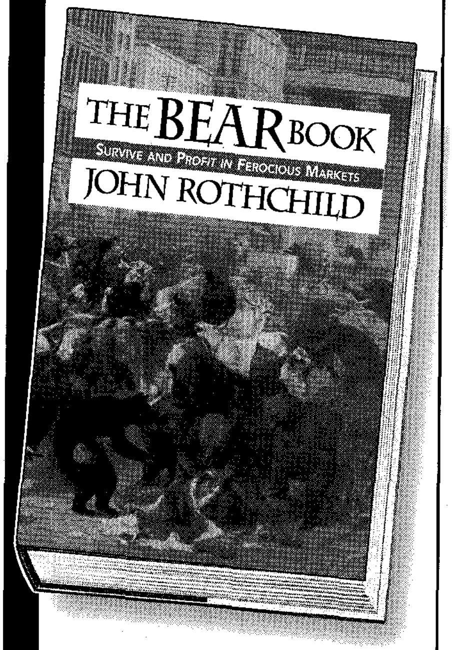

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either Protestant or Catholic. Culture is slowly becoming so harmless that it may be one of the non-controversial areas handed over to new joint bodies between Northern Ireland and the Republic to be established under the peace deal. How has this happened? Slowly the stereotypes have been taken over by a more potent cultural force. Television and shopping, still in their infancy when the conflict took off in 1968, have seeped into everybody's soul. These days, if you look closely at an I.R.A. rally commemorating the martyrs who died to get the British out, you will notice that many of the kids in the crowd are wearing the shirts of English football teams. If you watch an Orange flute band on parade, you will see that some of the kids can't wait to get out of their shiny black shoes and into their Nikes. And if you're a Belfast Protestant and you go to see "Titanic," you can't help noticing that as this symbol of your people's skills cuts through the Atlantic waves, the soundtrack is clearly influenced by Irish jigs.

Jigging at crossroads isn't, in any case, what it used to be. The glitzy Broadway-style Irish-dancing show "Riverdance" made its first visit to Belfast in 1996. Its opening night was the nearest the city had come to glamour since Bill Clinton switched on the Christmas-tree lights the previous year. Did the protectors of Protestant culture refuse to be seduced? No. Unionist politicians, including the leader of the Ulster Democratic Party, which has close ties to one of the main Protestant paramilitary groups, wanted to see the show. A taxi-driver arriving at the hall from a Protestant area observed wryly, "The Prods aren't what they used to be." Neither, thank Christ, are the Catholics.

US

NOT them.

On January 30, 1972, shortly before my fourteenth birthday, British paratroopers killed fourteen unarmed Catholics on the streets of the Northern Irish city of Derry. My father, a quiet, skeptical man, took me and my older brother aside and told us what would happen next. There was going to be a civil war, he said, and we would have to fight in it. He and my brother and I would soon be up North—in Derry. We would be armed; we would have guns in our hands. It was just as well for us to know this now.

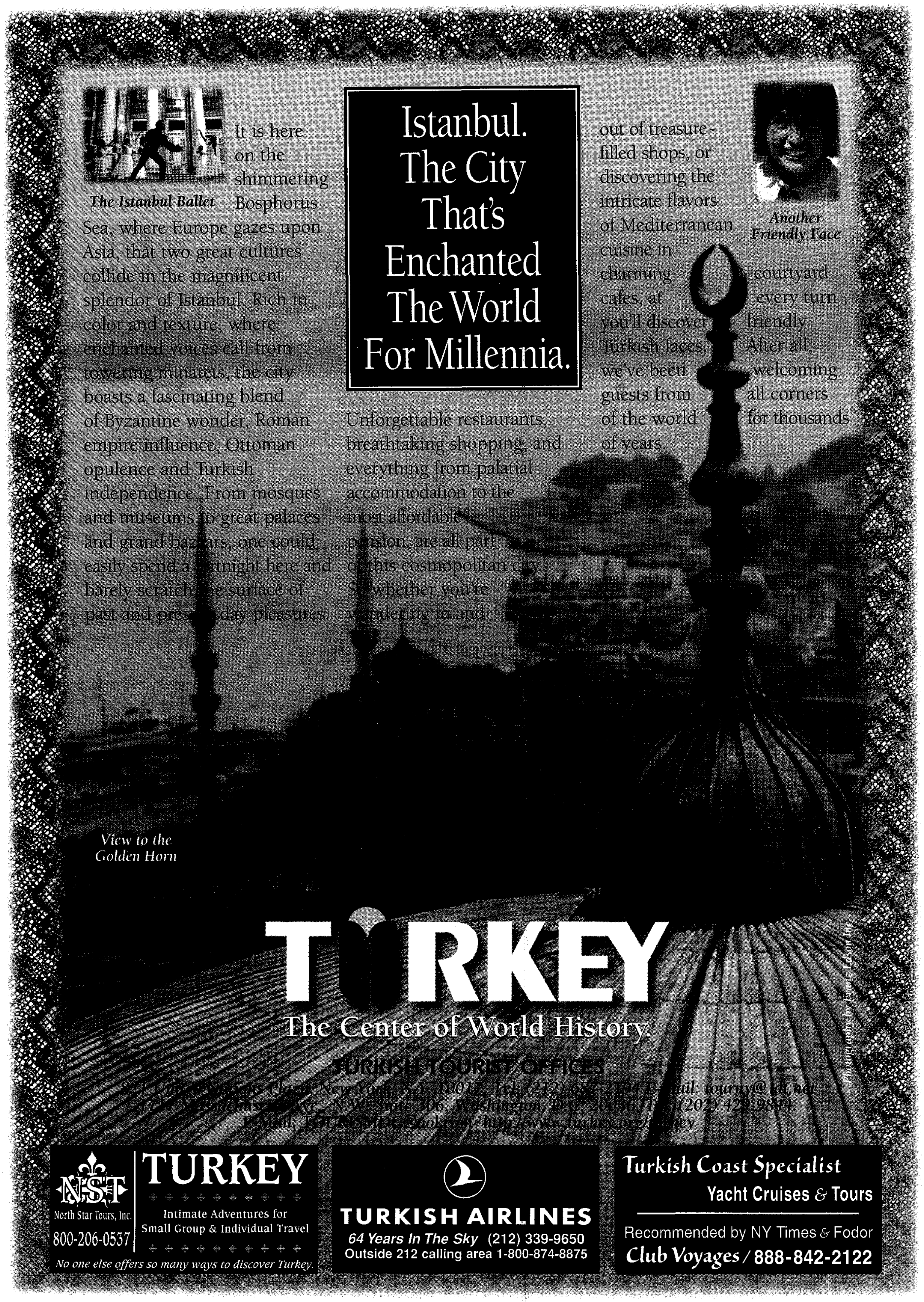
We didn't have to ask which side we would be fighting on. None of us had ever been in Derry, and we didn't feel terribly close to Northern Catholics, but they were undoubtedly part of us. When the civil war came, we would have to stand with them and sort out the confusions of Ireland once and for all. My father didn't like this, but he had read enough history to know that it was the way things happened.

Everything he said made perfect sense. I had learned at school that history was a long march toward an Ireland free of the British. The job had been half done in the early twenties, when the South broke free. But people couldn't live with unfinished national destinies. They needed permanence, clarity, and a state that accurately reflected who they were. Now, when there was blood on the streets, history was moving toward completion.

The I.R.A. thought so, too. When its armed campaign became a long war of attrition, it looked to my generation in the South to end the stalemate. In prison in the North, Gerry Adams devised a strategy—mobilize the working masses in the Republic for the armed struggle against the British. His turn toward politics was aimed at me and my friends. We were the disaffected youth. Once we understood that the British were the source of our oppression, we would flock to the cause.

What went wrong? Why didn't we mobilize? Why did Sinn Féin continually get no more than three per cent of the vote in elections in the Republic? Perhaps it was because we had grown up in a culture that was very sure of itself, and we found it smug, narrow-minded, and dull. And because we imagined that an unfinished, messy, contradictory nation might, after all, have a lot to offer us. Was the self-determination of the Irish people going to help us when we went looking for jobs in American-owned factories? When we emigrated to England or America, would it be nice to know that the Ireland we had left behind was a clean, uncomplicated nation? Was a civil war, even if it made our political identity perfectly clear, going to get us what we felt we wanted? We wanted sex and money and jobs and houses, and we knew that those desires, too, were *us*.

Most people in Northern Ireland came to want the same things. The problem has been finding the words that would allow them to say so. The exquisitely elaborate language of the peace deal might be eloquent enough to articulate those simple desires. ♦



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ANNALS OF MONEY

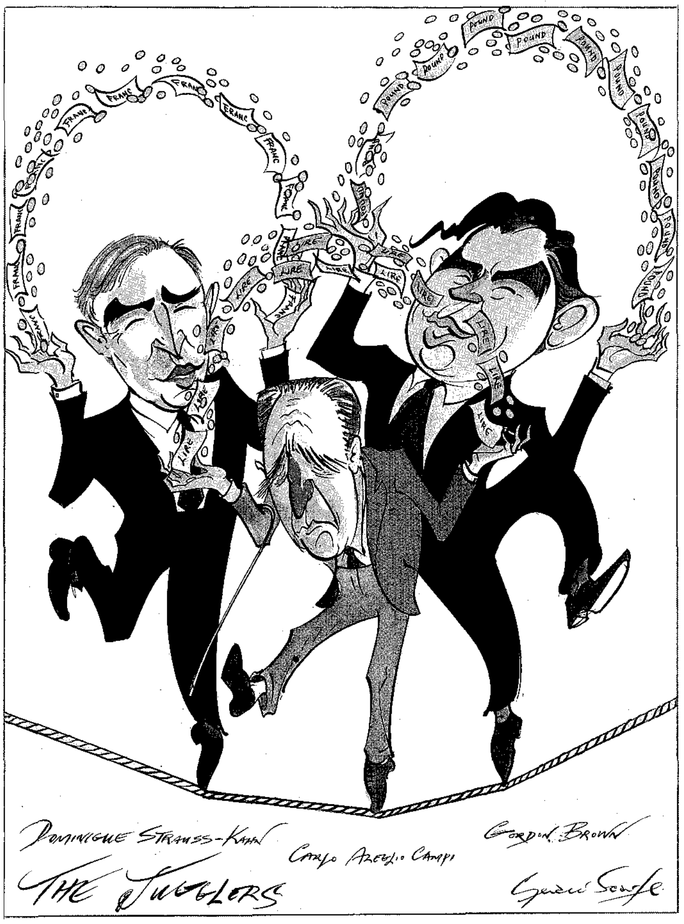
E PLURIBUS EURO

Many powerful European leaders believe that a single currency will keep the Continent from going to war. What if they're completely wrong?

BY ISABEL HILTON

WHEN I was growing up in Scotland, my father, who had been a student in Germany before the Second World War, told me stories about his experiences there. Germany's brand of Fascism, he explained, had come about because in the twenties German money was worth so little that a simple purchase required a suitcaseful of notes. As a child, I was puzzled by this, unable to understand how an inconceivably large pile of banknotes could signify poverty rather than riches. Perhaps German children who are brought up believing in the eternal solidity of the Deutsche mark also struggle with this mystery from their country's past. No German adults, though, have this difficulty: they understand in their bones that the Deutsche mark, created in one bold stroke amid the ruins of postwar Germany, was the rock on which everything since has been built.

Currency has always been more than what's in your bank account: it is also your country's story, a symbol as significant as an army or a flag. But after the war a process was set in motion which has served to diminish the significance of the national currency in Europe. It got its start, innocuously, as the Common Market, and then grew into the much grander-sounding European Union. Brussels, the capital of the least glamorous of Continental countries, became the unlikely headquarters of a project intent on abolishing border controls, creating a body of laws that would supersede the laws of each nation, and turning the diverse currencies of Europe into nothing more than historical curiosities. By next January, the single European currency will be a reality, and in 2002 the Italians will no longer have the lira, the Germans the Deutsche mark, or the French the franc: the Europeans will have the euro.



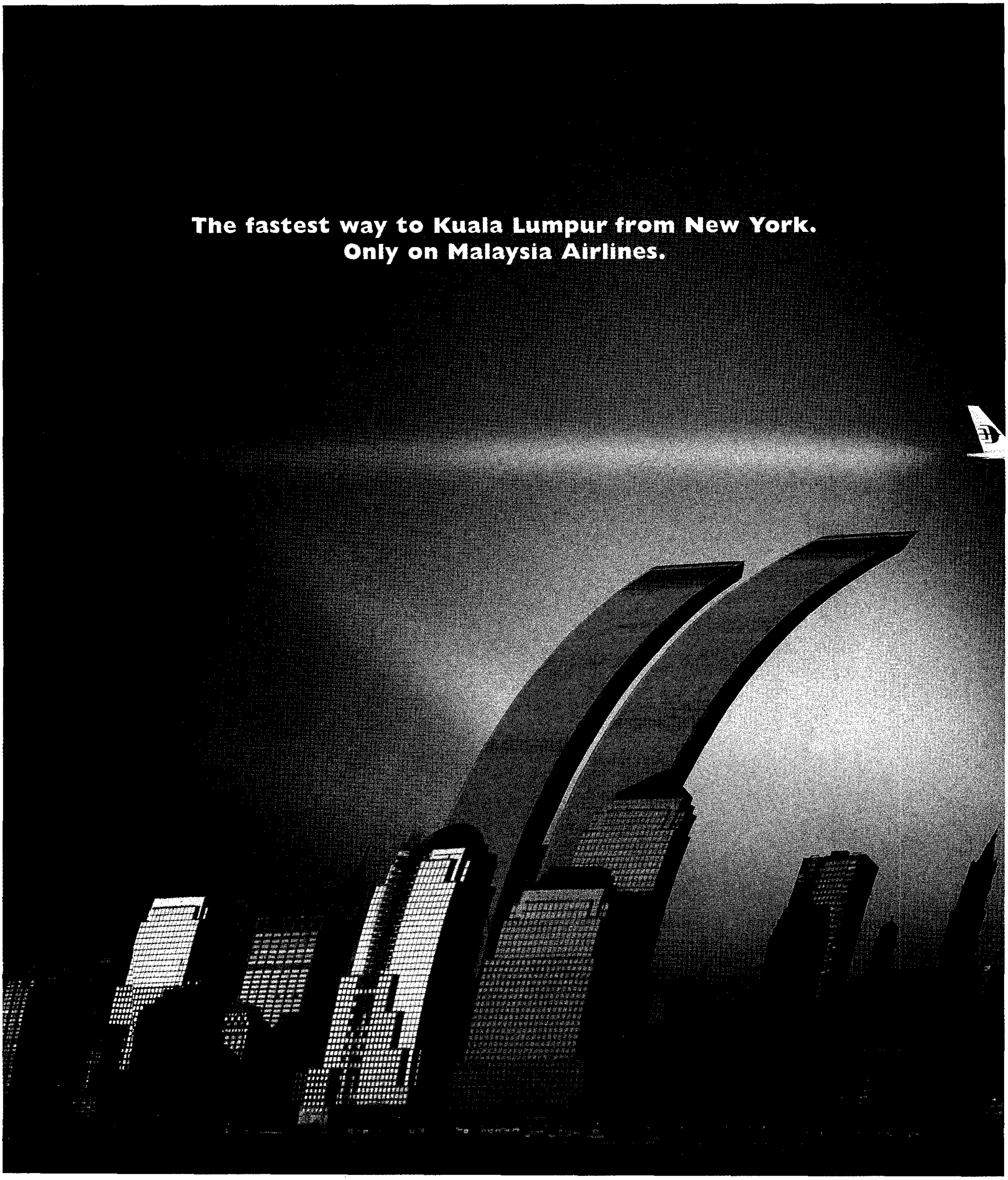
Last month, I embarked on a project: to meet three European finance ministers and ask them to explain monetary union.

Is this a good thing? For years, Europe's political leaders have said it is. They have told us again and again that monetary union will unite a continent that has been divided by ethnic and national battles, that it will render war impossible. But last year the distinguished Harvard economist Martin Feldstein made a different assertion. Once the countries of Europe were bound together by a single currency, with no way to withdraw, he argues in *Foreign Affairs*, "conflicts over economic policies and interference with national sovereignty could reinforce long-standing animosities based on history, nationality, and religion." A single currency, he suggests, will not stop war; it might actually create one. The idea, at such a late stage, that the union has gone too far is chilling to contemplate. Could Feldstein be right? Is it possible that the euro could bring the whole edifice of Europe—with its new grand buildings, its thousands of bureaucrats, and its volumes of law—crashing down upon our heads? The idea is one that some European voters—who haven't yet bought their leaders' party line—seem to share. Most, in fact, have responded to the idea of a single currency with suspicion. How, then, have their political leaders managed to get this far?

IT began with a simple question: How do you make an economic federation from a cluster of small countries, all with different customs, languages, and laws? The answer: You begin by creating a common market between them and then chip away at the obstacles to trade (taxes, tariffs, state subsidies) until eventually you achieve a genuine single market, in which everyone is doing business by the same rules. The European Community had reached this point by 1986. But one problem remained: each of the countries involved (except Luxembourg) had a national currency that was traded independently, and sometimes unpredictably, on the international currency markets.

Europeans were facing a problem that their American counterparts didn't share. Take, for example, a man who makes motor scooters in Milwaukee. He buys his parts and pays his factory workers in dollars, and then sells his scooters—in Milwaukee, or Los Angeles, or Miami—for dollars. His price is based on what it costs him to make his scooters, and he knows that if they sell he'll make a profit. A man who makes

GERALD SCARFE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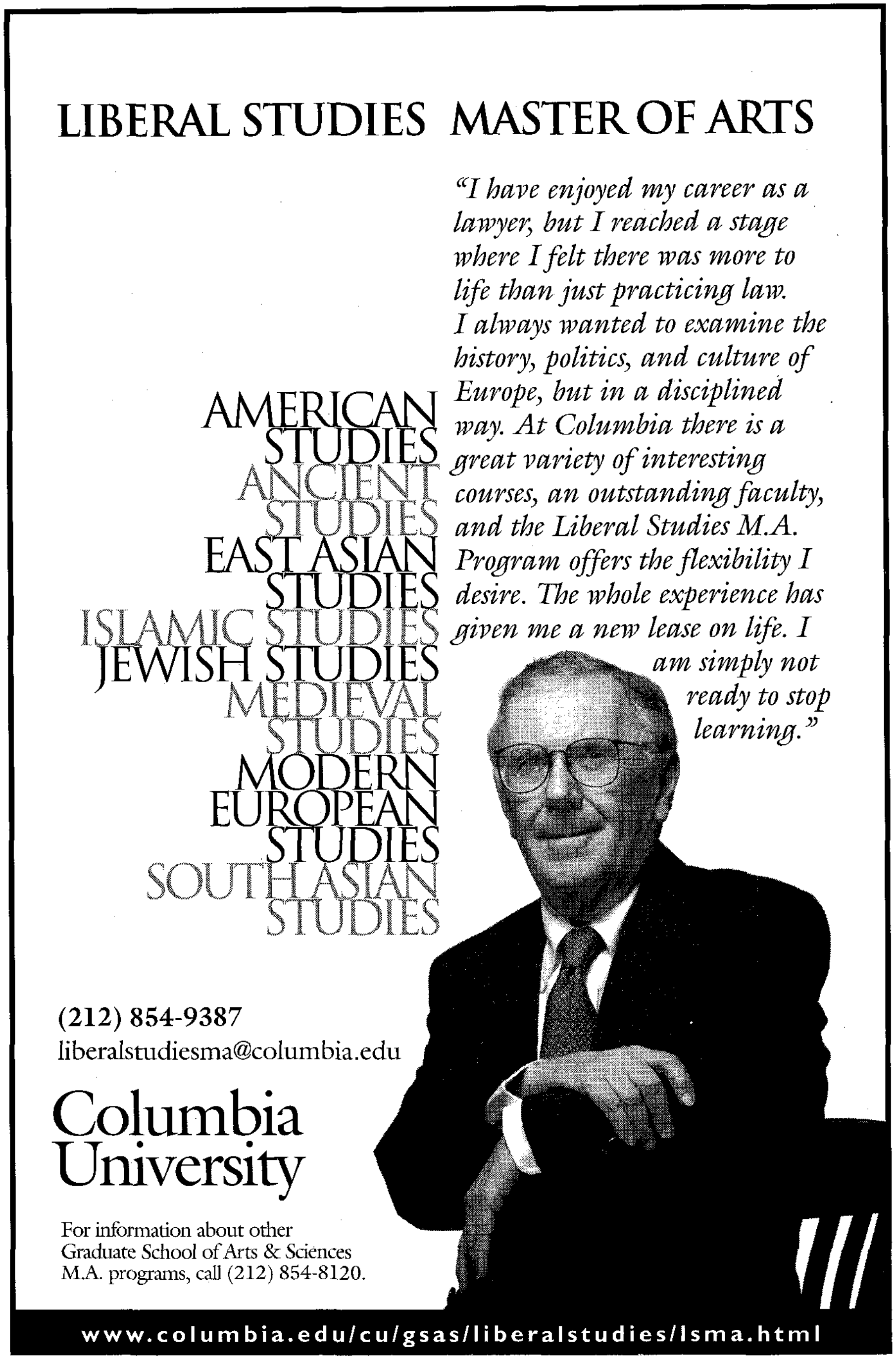
dishwashers in Milan can sell them in Milan or Rome, but, as Italy is smaller than the United States, he will probably also need to sell them in Düsseldorf in order to survive, and volatile exchange rates can make this difficult. If the lira suddenly rises against the Deutsche mark, he has to cut his price or risk losing his customers.

If the European Union was ever to have a single market, it would clearly be a more efficient one if all fifteen countries had a single currency. But, in order to do so, they would also need to have the same monetary policy and similar levels of growth, employment, and taxation.

FOR the politicians intent on making this happen, setting a date became the key. Once a date was fixed, the choice was between missing it—and thereby losing credibility—or meeting it, whatever that took. In Maastricht, in 1991, the countries of the European Union prepared a daunting timetable and three stringent criteria: by March, 1998, members would have to reduce their budget deficits to no more than three per cent and their national debt to no more than sixty per cent of gross domestic product, and inflation would need to hover within one and a half per cent of the three lowest countries' average rate. The results would be assessed by the European Monetary Institute—a new institution created to serve as financial watchdog. The institute would issue a report detailing which countries had met the economic criteria (and would therefore be allowed to trade with a single currency), and the final list would be confirmed in May—that is, next month.

Back in 1991, those who opposed the whole idea—Britain did so most vociferously—took comfort in the thought that few of the countries involved had any hope of meeting the economic criteria. Spain, Portugal, and Italy all faced serious problems. Even France and Germany had challenges to overcome. But now, seven years on, the odds are overwhelming that on May 2nd eleven countries will be eligible for the first phase of membership in the monetary union. (Britain decided, in 1991, to "opt out," and join later, if it so wished. Denmark and Sweden also deferred, and Greece had not, as of March 25th, passed the economic tests.) So if Mar-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tin Feldstein is right, Europe—most of it, at least—has begun the descent into catastrophe.

Why are politicians so strongly convinced that this is the path to glory? Last month, I embarked on my own project: I would meet with three of the finance ministers of Europe and ask them to explain. I wanted to see the French minister, Dominique Strauss-Kahn. The euro had begun as a French-German project, and Germany was important, of course. But the French had been most forceful in accelerating the process (perhaps they had the most to gain).

It might also be useful to talk to Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, since the non-participating British could always be counted on for a cool appraisal of Continental euphoria. At the other extreme, the Italians were said to be the most enthusiastic, and the Italian Treasury Minister, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, would undoubtedly inspire me.

ROME was glowing in an unseasonably warm early-spring sun. I dropped in on a colleague—Paolo Garimberti, of *La Repubblica*—to ask him if Italians were really as eager as they seemed to abandon the lira. "In Italy, we see everything like a football match," he told me. "So when the government said it wanted Italy to make it into the first round of monetary union, we felt that was like trying to get to the final of the World Cup."

Italy was a founding member of the European Union, but the idea that it could meet the criteria for monetary union was regarded with undisguised incredulity by many of Europe's bankers. How could the Germans, for instance, who were being coaxed into giving up their beloved Deutsche mark for an enterprise they viewed as risky at best, accept the idea of sharing a currency with Italy, a country that had long been a synonym for doubtful politics and unsteady economics? Nothing in Italy's history suggested that miracles were on the menu. Yet by the beginning of 1998 the country had forced its way onto the A-list. The man credited with this transformation was Carlo Azeglio Ciampi.

I set off for Ciampi's official apartments, in Rome's Treasury building, an impressive palazzo on Via XX Settembre. Upstairs, Ciampi was standing behind a vast desk—a small, slightly stooped figure. He didn't look up—a minister's touch—until he had initialled one last document, saving his attention until I had walked across the office and was standing in front of him. "He is keen on timetables," his chef de cabinet had told me. Punctuality and commitment are among the attributes that have won Ciampi his reputation as a rock of solidity in what have been extraordinarily turbulent times.

Ciampi is seventy-seven, and he moves with an elderly man's deliberate step. He dresses like the banker he was for decades—in a dark three-piece suit and a blue shirt with a simple maroon tie. Bushy eyebrows and a habit of not looking up while he speaks give him the appearance of a grandfather wondering how to fix a broken toy that a child has just pressed into his hand. He also exudes the reassuring competence of a man who knows how to put the bits together again.

Ciampi first emerged from the security of the banking profession in 1993, at a time when Italy was sliding into chaos. The two parties that had ruled the country since the early sixties—the center-right Christian Democrats and the center-left Italian Socialist Party—had spent freely and become tainted by suspicions of corruption. By 1993, more than three thousand politicians and businessmen were under investigation. The economy was no more stable. The national debt was soaring, and the interest on it was being paid by creating new debt. In September, 1992, the lira and the pound sterling, judged the weakest currencies in Europe, were bounced out of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism by a wave of speculation. (The mechanism had been used since the seventies to stabilize European currencies, which were allowed to fluctuate within limits; if they exceeded those limits, they were bought or sold to bring them back into line—a currency speculator's dream, and one that made George Soros a billion dollars.)

Amid this chaos, Ciampi was invited to become Prime Minister. He took office not as a politician but as a technician; in fact, he made a disarmingly modest Prime Minister. Paolo Garimberti recalls

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having been one of several journalists invited to help Ciampi prepare for a visit to the United States, in 1993. Ciampi asked the journalists to question him. "He said, 'Imagine you're Clinton,' so we all asked him questions for a while," Garimberti says. "He was very well prepared on finance but not on politics. When I asked him about Russia, he looked at me in astonishment. 'I know nothing about Russia,' he said."

Two years ago, the government changed again: a left-center coalition, headed by Romano Prodi, won the general election, and Ciampi was made Treasury Minister. He and Prodi set membership in the European Monetary Union as their principal objective. Italians had transferred their faith from their own government to the institutions of Europe, and to be left out of the union would be a fatal blow to national pride. To join it would, Ciampi argued, instill a rectitude that Italy had not managed to achieve on its own.

However unpleasant the medicine, the Italians were prepared to swallow it if Ciampi was holding the spoon. He recruited a bright young team and oversaw a wide-ranging program of spending cuts and privatizations in almost every sector. In June, 1997, he sold a portion of Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi, the state oil-and-gas company. In an extraordinary move, he also introduced an emergency nine-month "Euro tax." He needed it to bring down the national deficit, but he promised that this compulsory loan from the citizens would eventually be repaid, if everything went according to plan.

Since 1993, the deficit has dropped from ten to 2.7 per cent, and inflation has fallen from five to less than two per cent. It is hard to imagine that any previous government could have got this far. But Ciampi is trusted by the Italian voters. "I have no political ambitions," he told me. "I decided to enter this government in order to support the objective of participating in the euro, because I consider it the most important event in European history."

Why did he set such store by the single currency?

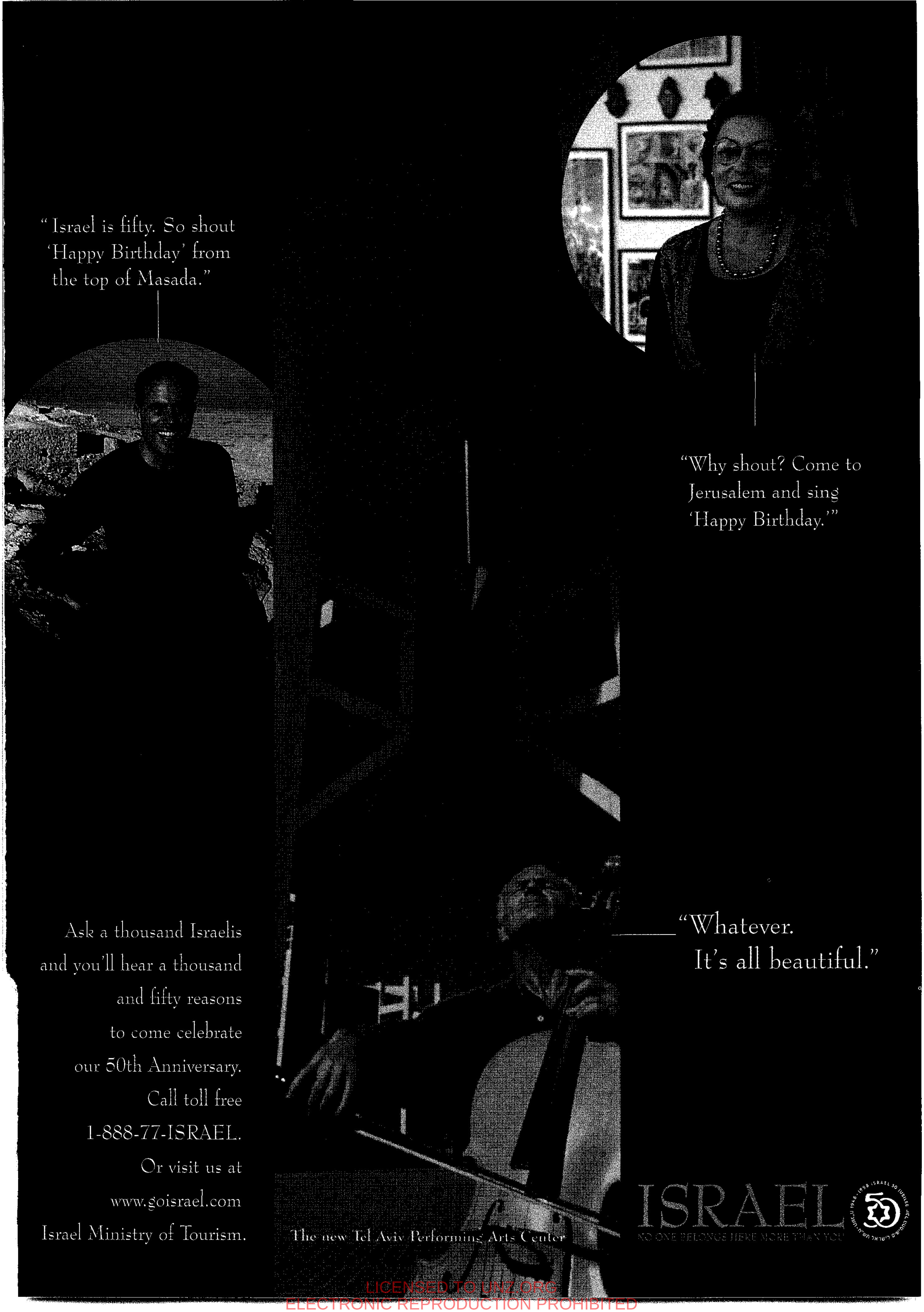
Ciampi gave me a long, level look. He belonged, he replied, to a generation whose commitment to the European Union was forged in the horrors of the Second World War. "In 1939, when I was nineteen, I went to study in Bonn," he said. "There we were, students from several European countries. We joked that we were friends but could soon be enemies. Which, of course, is what happened. It was an experience I can't forget. I am convinced," he added, mildly, "that the creation of European institutions with checks and balances is the only way to prevent the dangers of 1939 from recurring."

Ciampi means that having a single currency will be a step toward achieving a closer political union—a Europe governed, in part, at least, by European institutions. This is the kind of talk that causes nervousness in other capitals and is anathema in London. "Not everyone shares this point of view," he admitted, glancing up from under his heavy eyebrows with a look that, in a politician, might be construed as foxy.

In early March, he tried to raise another thirty trillion lire (sixteen billion dollars) to reduce the national debt by privatizing even more of the state's oil-and-gas company, but the hard-left party, Rifondazione Comunista, adamantly protested the sale. He also plans to sell off the state electricity monopoly and the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro. Ciampi clearly still has serious obstacles to overcome.

That evening, I dined with friends. "If you want to know about Ciampi," they said, "you should talk to Sandra Verusio." Verusio, the wife of an Italian marchese, is the hostess of one of those most Italian of institutions, a political salon, and her apartment in the Piazza San Salvatore in Lauro has become a place where figures from the liberal intelligentsia, members of parliament, and movers and shakers of the left-wing establishment are invited to eat and drink, to gossip and make political deals.

It was nearly midnight when we arrived, but the salon was in full swing. Verusio greeted me warmly, and introduced me to some of her guests—a deputy in the left-wing Democratic Party, a member of the European parliament, and a professor of economics. Then she settled her slim form on a deep-red sofa. "Ciampi? We love him," she said. "But there is no scandal," she added, perhaps misunderstanding the nature of the in-



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WHEN I went back to London, there was interesting news from Germany. In February, a hundred and fifty-five professors of economics had signed a letter proposing that monetary union be postponed. To press ahead, they said, would put Germany's currency at risk. The month before, four other eminent dissenters, whom the press dubbed the Gang of Four, had tried to challenge the euro in the Constitutional Court. The government had responded firmly: there was no question of a delay, it said. But the high level of public sympathy for the Gang's case was confirmed by an opinion poll, which found that fifty-eight per cent of Germans did not want the single currency to start in 1999, only thirty per cent supported the euro, and a mere one in five thought that the new currency would be as strong as the Deutsche mark.

A few days later, I was on a morning train to Paris, looking forward to lunch with Dominique Strauss-Kahn. The gastronomic tastes of a French government minister—particularly one who was rumored to have gained a kilo for every month he'd spent in office—were surely something to investigate. At midday, my mobile phone rang. "The Minister would like to change the appointment from one o'clock to three," I was told.

The new rendezvous was in a café above a pastry shop in the Rue de Bourgogne, on the Left Bank. It was so discreet that I walked past it twice. Upstairs, a scattering of middle-aged ladies were taking tea in a hushed atmosphere. At three-fifteen, Strauss-Kahn, the forty-nine-year-old head of France's most powerful ministry, hurried up the stairs and launched into a breathless apology for his late arrival.

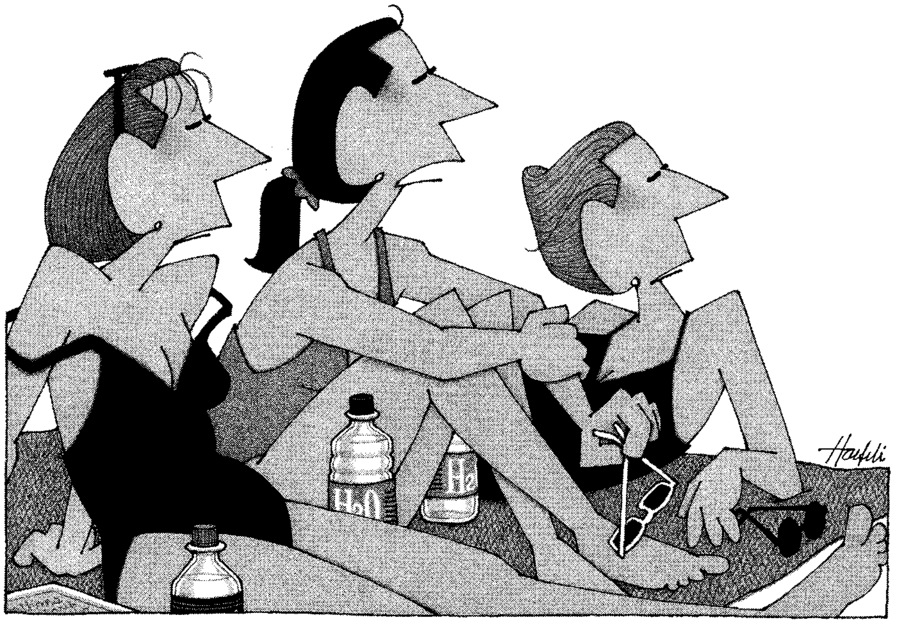
"I'm sure you are very busy," I said.

"Not busy," he replied. "Just badly organized."

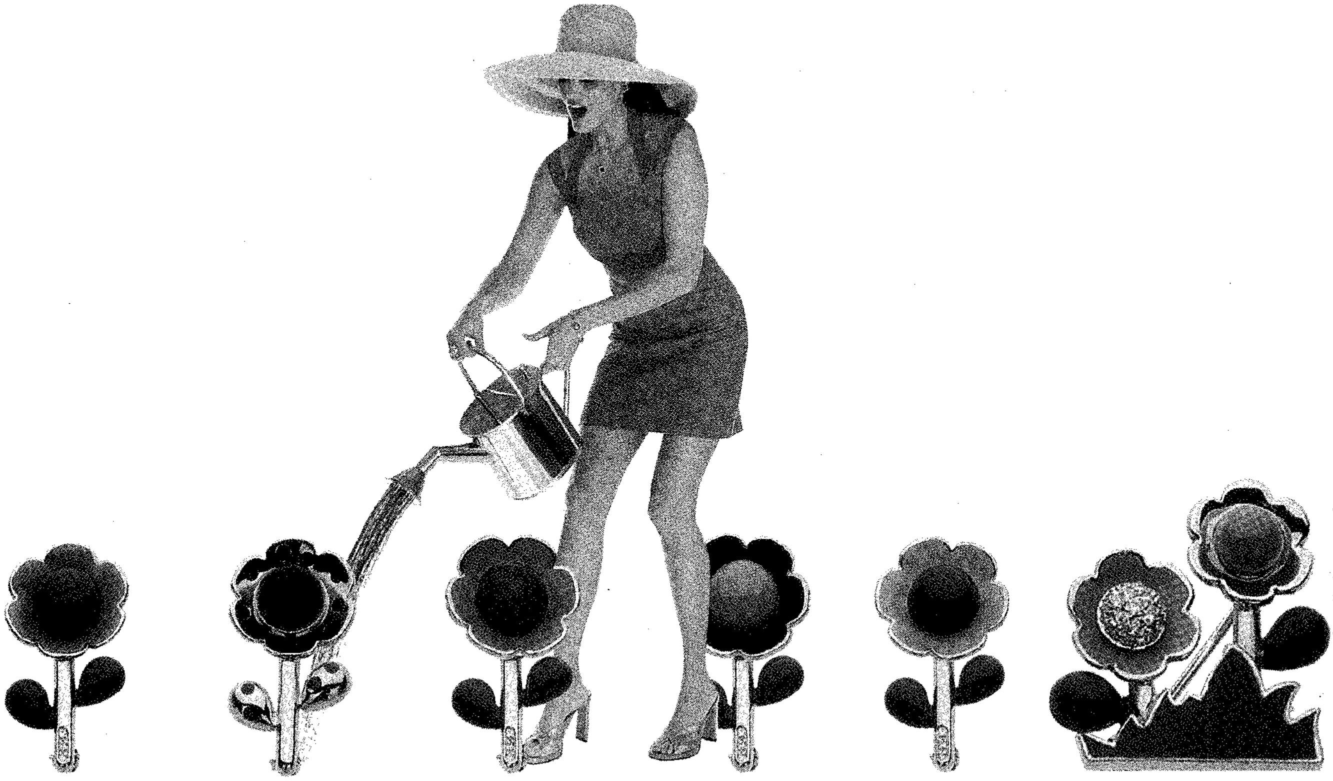
The tea-drinking ladies of the Left Bank either did not recognize their finance minister or were too well bred to react. Strauss-Kahn sat down on a spindly chair and ordered an espresso. He confessed that he had just come from lunch with the newly elected regional deputies of the Socialist Party, who would be voting, a few days later, to propel one of his colleagues to the presidency of Île-de-France, the country's richest and most powerful fiefdom. It was a bittersweet occasion for the Minister of Economics, Finance, and Industry. The Île-de-France presidency could be used as a stepping stone to the mayoralty of Paris. It could even be a strong base for a direct bid for the French Presidency itself. Strauss-Kahn had coveted the position for years.

"I was interested," he admitted, ruefully. "But I had to choose. I discussed it with my friends and finally decided that I should stay where I was."

Strauss-Kahn came to his current post



"He has the rough outline of a good body but none of the details."



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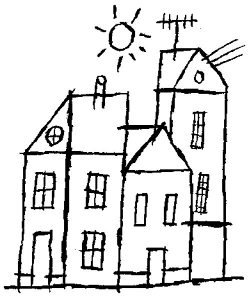
rather late in the process of adjusting the French economy to the rigors of the Maastricht criteria. In fact, those adjustments had cost the previous administration the election: the French may have helped to originate the euro project, but when the French people were subjected to the budgetary measures needed to bring it to fruition they turned out on the streets in the thousands. When an early election was called last year in response, the Socialists won, and Lionel Jospin, the head of the Party, replaced the incumbent Prime Minister, Alain Juppé. Jospin promised to reduce the workweek to thirty-five hours, and to spare voters any further austerity measures. He would put the brake on privatizations, he said, and keep ailing factories open. So when Jospin became Prime Minister, a frisson of uncertainty ran through the project of monetary union. If he kept his promises, how would France stick to the Maastricht requirements?

Strauss-Kahn claims that there was never any doubt about Jospin's or his own commitment to monetary union. But their options were limited. In an effort to generate extra revenue and reduce the French deficit, Strauss-Kahn raised taxes on big-business profits by fifteen per cent. He also began describing the pension funds of the state telephone company, France Telecom, as a government asset. Critics in Brussels accused him of cheating, and the maneuver made many wonder whether France could really comply with the Maastricht criteria. A more sensitive issue surrounds the cuts in social security, health benefits, and public-sector pay that he has avoided making, and which most analysts believe he cannot dodge for much longer. But if Strauss-Kahn does plan to make cuts, he won't have to say so until he presents his budget to parliament in September, well after the deadline for announcing membership in the monetary union.



Strauss-Kahn is an unusual finance minister for France. He is not a graduate of the École Nationale d'Administration, where most members of the country's political élite are trained. He is a secular Jew from Eastern France, whose family has what he describes as "partly German culture." When Strauss-Kahn was two years old, his father, a tax counsellor and lifelong socialist, took the family to live in Morocco, and then, later, to Monaco. Strauss-Kahn returned to Paris to study, but in 1968, when the students of Paris were in rebellion, his mind was on other things. As an academic economist, he became an expert on pensions and social inequalities, and his writings eventually attracted the attention of the Socialist Party. He still behaves more like an academic than like a minister. He is friendly and direct, without the pomposity that long exposure to power can produce. I asked him why he had gone into politics.

"Maybe I decided that it was easier to make changes through politics than through economics," he said. "And, you know," he added, "France is a very old-fashioned country. There's a lot that needs changing."

Strauss-Kahn admits to feeling both elation and anxiety about the prospect of a single currency in Europe. "A year ago, many Europeans said that conversion wouldn't happen on schedule. But nobody has said that since December. What was just a dream is becoming reality. There's a lot of optimism and a lot of fear."

Was he worried by the public hostility to monetary union in Germany?

"Would I prefer more enthusiasm on the part of the German people?" he asked. "Yes. Will their lack of enthusiasm influence the process? No. Chancellor Kohl is deeply involved, and, finally, so is the S.P.D." The S.P.D., Germany's Social Democratic Party and the main opposition to Helmut Kohl's ruling Christian Democrats, has toyed with the idea of opposing the single currency, as have many of Europe's other center-left parties. But Gerhard Schröder, Kohl's likely opponent in September's parliamentary elections, has made it plain that he no longer wishes to challenge it.

Not everybody, I suggested to Strauss-Kahn, shares his optimism. From 1979 to 1981, Strauss-Kahn worked under Martin Feldstein at the National Bureau of Economic Research. What did he think of Feldstein's thesis that monetary union could lead to war?

He winced. "The article he wrote

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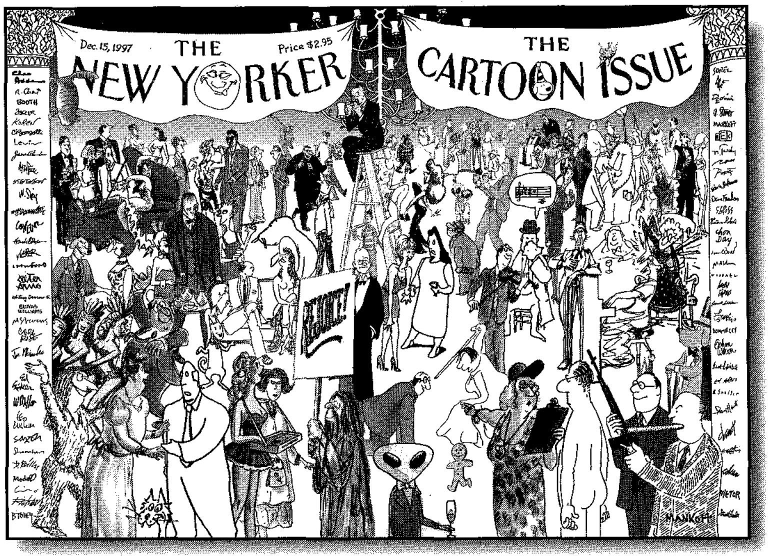
was very emotional and not totally rational," he said. "Perhaps he is afraid of the euro's competing with the dollar. I know that other people are. But if the euro becomes a major reserve currency"—that is, a currency to hold if you want stability and security—"I think there will be a kind of equilibrium in the world."

This sounds like French diplomatic talk for "Move over, dollar," but Strauss-Kahn maintained that the United States would benefit from a strong euro. He had been watching the American attitude toward a single currency, he said, and it had gone through several phases: "First, Americans talked about Fortress Europe, but they also said, 'Why worry? It will never happen.' In the second phase, the Americans could see that it was going to happen, but they said that it would be bad for us. In the third phase, they realized that it would work. I don't know why Feldstein takes that position." He grinned. "Maybe he was one of the people who said it would never happen."

For Strauss-Kahn, like Ciampi, the excitement of monetary union now lies in what will come afterward. And he will probably be around to see it through. Though loyalty is not always rewarded in politics, Jospin is said to value it highly—and, as Strauss-Kahn has helped Jospin climb the ladder, Jospin has hauled Strauss-Kahn up behind him. The next step for both is clear: when Jacques Chirac's term as President is up, Jospin will be positioned to vie for the job. And in France the President chooses the Prime Minister. "My reward?" Strauss-Kahn laughed as he prepared his diplomatic response. "My reward will be Jospin's victory."

In Europe today, the distinctions of left and right no longer mark the real political battle lines. In this post-Cold War era, they lie between those who favor closer integration in Europe, with its progressive pooling of national sovereignty, and those who defend the nation-state.

Nowhere has that argument been pursued more stubbornly than in Britain. Margaret Thatcher hated the idea of monetary union, and if her successor, John Major, had milder inclinations, he was too weak politically to stand up to those members of his own party who were hostile to the prospect. As Europe



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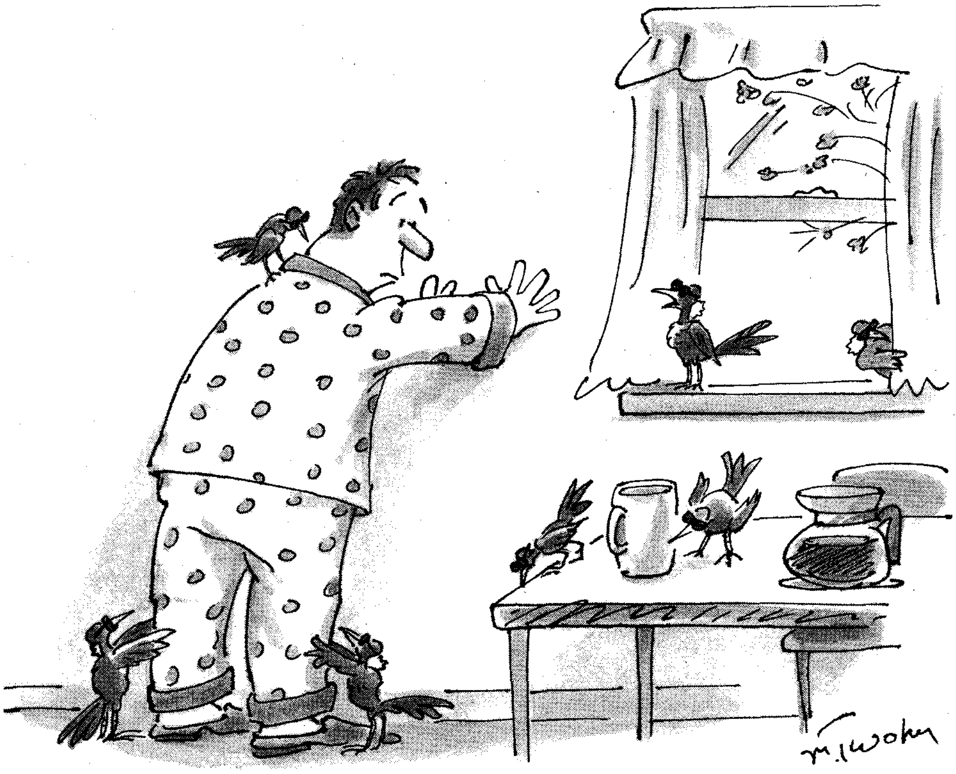

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prepared for the single currency, Britain entered its most truculent uncoöperative phase. But, when the Conservatives suffered a catastrophic electoral defeat in May, 1997, and the first Labour Government for eighteen years came to power, Tony Blair promised that Britain would take its place at the heart of Europe.

As my taxi made its way through early-morning London traffic to the Treasury building in Whitehall, I could see Gordon Brown's name in the headlines on every newsstand. Two days earlier, on March 17th, he had presented the first complete Labour budget to Parliament, and its measures were still front-page news. Brown had proposed more money for education and health, cuts in corporate taxes, and no increases above over-all spending limits. The newspapers were still carrying favorable responses, and the stock market and sterling had both risen sharply. Anxious to dispel the memory of previous Labour governments' more spendthrift approaches, Brown has taken such a rigorous line on public spending that he has been nicknamed the Iron Chancellor.

The weekend before, two uncharacteristic appearances in Britain's Sunday press had shown Brown trying to soften his rather grim public image. The first was staged at a birthday party for the son of a member of the Treasury staff. Brown was photographed with his girlfriend, Sarah Macaulay—a rare event for a man who likes to keep his private life private. The second was a rather girlish interview in a broadsheet in which the journalist hinted, on the basis of no more convincing evidence than the renovation of the kitchen in the Chancellor's Scottish home, that Brown might be thinking of marriage. Both items sparked comment in the days that followed.

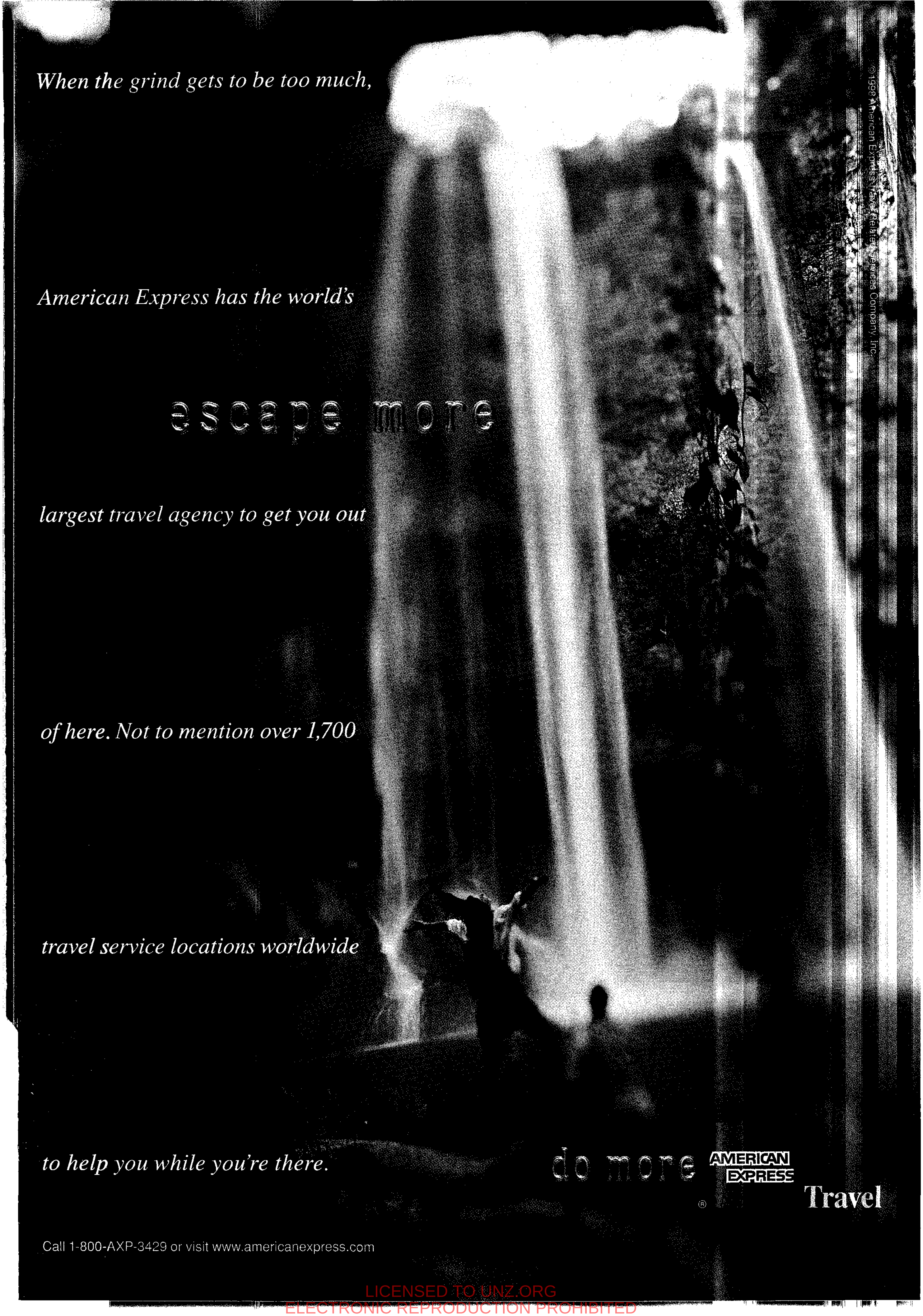
Being a bachelor used not to matter in British politics. But some say that Brown's bachelorhood was one of the factors that cost him the leadership of the Labour Party. When the former leader, John Smith, died suddenly, in May, 1994, the choice for his replacement fell between two Young Turks, Gordon Brown and Tony Blair. The two men had previously agreed not to run against each other in the event of a leadership contest—so as to avoid splitting the vote of the reforming wing of the Party. Brown, the intellectual heavyweight, was the senior of the two, with a longer history in politics, but Blair was ultimately considered more voter-friendly.

Brown and I had both been students at Edinburgh University, and as long as I'd known him he had been wedded to politics, but the popular image of him as a humorless Scots Presbyterian did not match that of the young man I remembered. He was, it's true, a son of the manse. But I knew an altogether wittier and more charismatic character, who lived in a notoriously untidy apartment, gave large and noisy parties, and could often be found in the bar, downing pints of beer and talking politics. In 1972, he was elected Rector of the University—the first time a student had occupied the post—and he produced a stream of radical political writing.

The student gradually filled out into a professional politician, but, like all his Labour Party contemporaries, he had to sit out eighteen years of Conservative governments before getting his own chance at power. When he finally made it, last May, at the age of forty-six, it was apparent that he would be a considerable force. Four days after he took office in the Treasury, he announced that the Bank of England would henceforth be independent—free to set short-term interest rates without political interference. It was a flamboyant touch. Was he merely modernizing Britain's economic management, or was he, perhaps, preparing the country for membership in the European Monetary Union—proving that it could be trusted not to tweak its financial levers in its own interest?

An aide greeted me in the gloomy lobby of the Treasury and led me down the long, echoing corridors to Brown's office. "How are you?" Brown asked when I arrived. "It's been a long time." We settled on opposite sofas and chatted about friends we knew in common. But business was business, and as the conversation turned to monetary union the sober Chancellor took over.

Of all the members of the Cabinet, Brown is possibly the most pro-European and the most firmly convinced that conversion to a single currency is right. And, in theory, Britain could join the single currency anytime. After almost two decades of official Conservative hostility, however, British public opinion is ambivalent about the whole proj-



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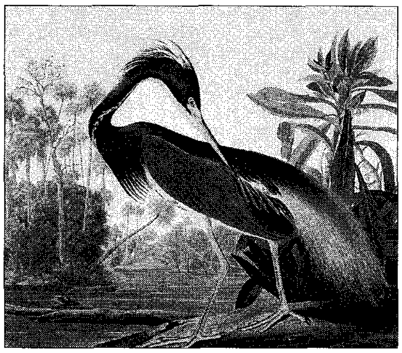

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ect. An opinion poll published the day I met with Brown showed that fifty-nine per cent of the British people were against it, and Rupert Murdoch's media empire had long stood ready to attack any movement toward participation. In its rush to neutralize the issue, Labour had decided to rule out membership until after the next election, and promised that a referendum would be held before Britain joined.

"Under the circumstances," I asked Brown, "was the referendum pledge a mistake?"

"No." The Chancellor was emphatic. "It was the right decision. This is a highly charged issue in Britain," he explained. "The issue is not Europe. The British are not inherently anti-European. I think they want leadership in Europe, and once they see that we can assume that role they will support membership."

His problem, though, is that early membership in the single currency is rapidly becoming the key to leadership in Europe. At a Luxembourg summit, in December, 1997, the European Union approved a French-German proposal to create a council made up of the economic and finance ministers of the countries that had actually joined the single currency. The newly titled Euro-X (with "X" equal to the number of countries using the euro) will start functioning in May of this year. Since Britain will not be participating, it will likely be pushed to the margins of European decision-making.

Brown puts a brave face on his situation, but the truth is that the British are going to have to acknowledge a fact they have always tried to ignore—that the European Union is more than just a free-trade region, and its members are required to accept a loss of national sovereignty in exchange for influence. A Britain that remains on the margins of Europe's most important project, I pointed out, cannot be a leader in Europe.

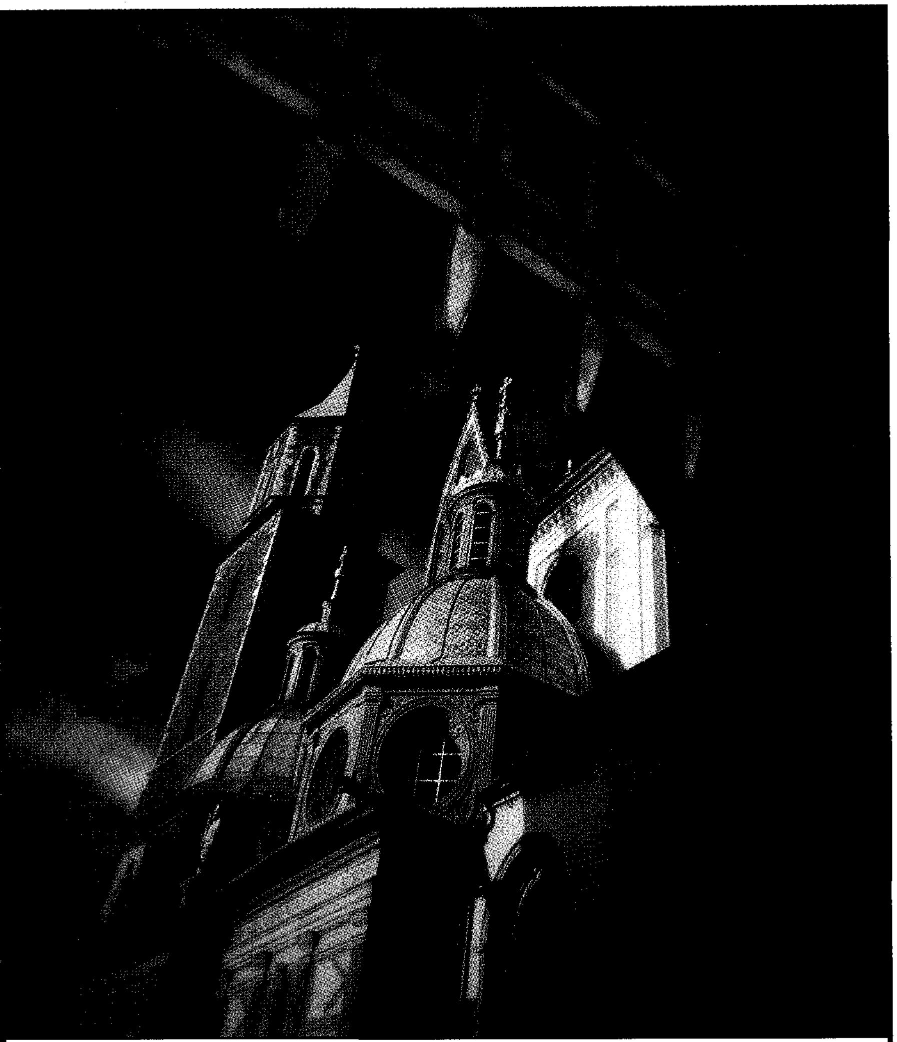
Brown said that he had other priorities, and, anyway, a single currency was only the first stage. "Monetary union will bring low interest rates and limit the power of currency speculation, but in order for it to work we need to make further changes." He talked about the need to create jobs and to come up with ways of obliging people on the dole to take them. It was a diplomatic response.

Brown refuses to predict a date for British entry into the monetary union, but hints that by the time the euro notes and coins come into circulation, in 2002, the nation's economy may be convergent. Clinching the deal, though, will still depend on persuading the British to vote "Yes" in the referendum.

Two days later, Europe's finance ministers congregated for a meeting in York. Outside, anti-Europe demonstrators waved the Union Jack and shouted, "We don't want your euro here"—a depressing reminder, perhaps, of the distance that Brown has yet to cover.

ON March 25th, the European Monetary Institute issued its long-awaited report on which countries had met the criteria for membership. Among the eleven countries that had made it, or had come close enough to be allowed in, the mood was one of cautious celebration. France had got what it wanted, in the short term, but whether its Socialist government can carry out a more profound welfare reform without bringing protesters onto the streets remains to be seen. The Italian press went wild, but a minor sour note was sounded. Doubts persisted, the European Monetary Institute admitted, about whether Italy's effort could be sustained. In Germany, Chancellor Kohl described the institute's report as the fulfillment of a goal toward which many Europeans have worked. Britain was doing what it always did: sitting it out, waiting to see, still proclaiming its leadership role in an enterprise in which it had marginalized itself.

None of the ministers I saw believed in Feldstein's prophecy of doom, but each of them knew that monetary union was a leap into the unknown. While Ciampi and Strauss-Kahn were thrilled to have defied the odds and fulfilled a dream, I was still bothered by the political questions. There is no central European government and none in prospect: neither the people of Europe nor their governments feel ready for such a step. Without one, though, there is a political lopsidedness to the single currency, whatever its economic merits. When your government messes up the economy or the currency, you can take revenge at the next election. But if the European Central Bank messes up how do you vote it out? ♦



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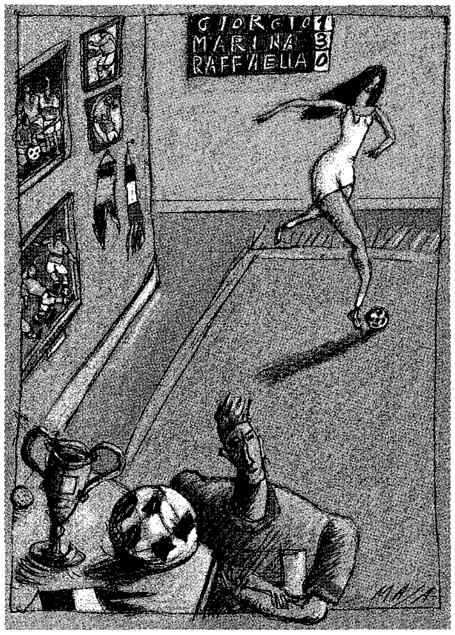
ANALOGIES

Why is infidelity so much like a game of soccer?

BY TIM PARKS

On a Sunday afternoon in September, 1996, Verona lost its first home fixture of the season, 2–nil to Bologna. It was also the day my friend Giorgio told me that his marriage was on the rocks. We were at the south end of the stadium, where the hard-core fans hang out. Basically, Italian soccer has three major divisions—Serie A, B, and C—and at the end of each year the teams at the bottom of a division "go down," while the ones at the top "go up." There was a lot of excitement before this game, as it was Verona's first return to Serie A in many years. Banners and fireworks, high hopes, stirring chants: followed by great disappointment. The team was unfit and uninspired. I can't remember it making a single shot on goal. Bologna was kind to score only twice.



At soccer games, Giorgio would say that he was in love with Raffaella.

"I'm moving out, renting a separate apartment," Giorgio confided as we shuffled out of the stadium. He had never loved his wife, he said. My son, Michele, a stalwart twelve-year-old, wept and kicked the steps. Giorgio's slightly older daughter, Maria Giulia, smiled stoically. For the next eight months, we were bound together by our season tickets.

Notoriously fickle, memory seems to have two modes: the over-all impression and the episode. It's remarkable how little interplay there is between these two. Thus, the next home game, against Cagliari, a draw, was overwhelmingly dull, but the episodes that I recall are very positive: our laughably lucky first goal, deflected off a defender; the brilliant second goal, a low driving shot coming off a high cross. Some marriage counsellors say that one negative experience wipes out at least five positive ones, leaving no favorable sediment. Certainly, Giorgio (all the names here have been changed, of course) could remember absolutely nothing happy about his fifteen-year marriage. But I hoped that that draw snatched from Cagliari might turn the tide. My son thought we deserved more. Maria Giulia proclaimed it a fair result.

There is a difference between fidelity and faith, in soccer and in love. I came to the city of Verona by purest chance. An Italian girl I met at a party in Boston had a brother who studied medicine here and was able to offer me and my wife his apartment for a week after we were married. We stayed; the yellow-blues became my team. And though I might sometimes have wished to support Milan, Juventus, or Inter, the kind of club that could give you a championship, I have never been unfaithful. I don't want another team. I want my own to be successful. "*In Italia Hellas*," we sing—officially, the club's called Hellas Verona—"*In Europa Hellas*." And the chant ends, "*e ovunque Hellas è sempre gialloblù*." Everywhere Hellas! Always yellow-blue. What fidelity! But without faith—for none of us remotely believe we will ever reach the heights of the European

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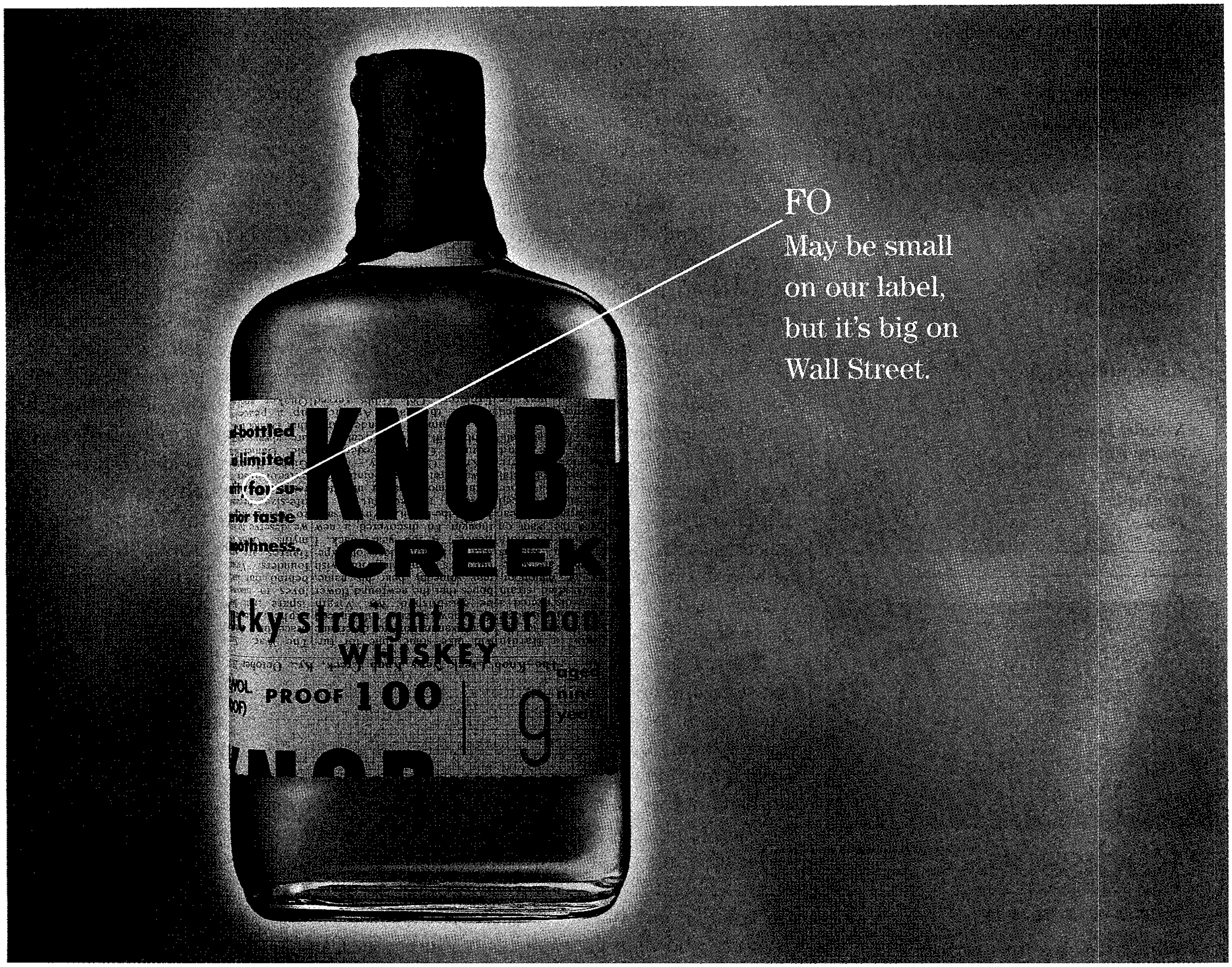
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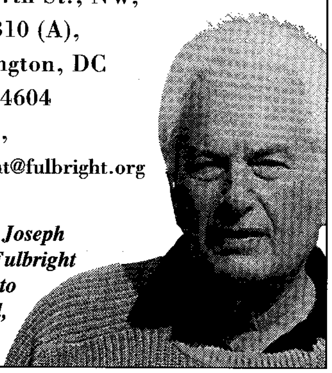

Novelist Joseph Heller, Fulbright Scholar to England, 1949

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Cup, never mind any broader horizons.

Giorgio said the point was that he hadn't really chosen his wife. It had all been an accident that happened when they were very young. Therefore it was quite reasonable that he should now have another passion: banally, his secretary. But he hadn't persuaded her to move into his new apartment. Her name was Raffaella. Eighteen years younger than he, she lived at home with parents who would disapprove. Also, there was a boyfriend still to be discarded. And he would be discarded, she said, once Giorgio made it quite clear what he wanted to do about his marriage. Giorgio spent his evenings walking in the suburban cold and discussing things on his mobile phone with his girlfriend and his wife. "Don't tell the children anything until I've decided," he said.

One of the perverse pleasures of soccer is the gap that so often opens up between what one deserves and what one gets. We performed very solidly against Inter in early November, only to see them pull ahead in the last minute, with a brilliant goal by Javier Zanetti. Giorgio was disgusted. "We didn't deserve that," he said. I didn't tell him that his wife, Marina, had used the same words to tell me how she felt about his desertion.

Marina had called on a number of occasions and finally came round to visit. She tried to be cynical and bright but was constantly on the point of tears. She wanted to understand, she said. If Giorgio had another woman he would have told her. He had sworn that he didn't. I said something about men's finding this period of life difficult. Apparently, Giorgio would come home for a couple of days, cry, and then go away again. And each time he went away it was for longer. She felt that she did not deserve this. She was paying a terribly high price for the children she had had, who had made her less attractive. But she had faith, she said. She could not believe he would not come back. He was a good man. She knew he was. Frankly, I thought she was looking pretty good.

OUR first victory came against Roma. After the previous week's draw, at Reggiana ("lowly Reggiana," an English sports reporter would say), there had been talk in the papers about certain players not trying hard enough, not honoring their yellow-blue shirts. I felt that this was unfair. Why would they not try hard? "Happy is my lot in life," says Kierkegaard, "if my wish coincides with my duty." And surely this is almost always true for a footballer. For why on earth would he not wish to win? Marina's wishes also seemed to coincide with her duty: loving her husband and children. In this sense, she, like the indignant Verona players interviewed by the local paper, could claim, however badly things were going, to be happy with herself.

Not so Giorgio. Before the game, he began to weep over the question of his children. He did it softly, so that, with the noise of the crowd, Maria Giulia would not hear. It was a bracing cold winter day, and she was tearing up her program to make paper planes. At the same time, he was in love with Raffaella. Or believed he was. He then spoke earnestly of having a duty to himself: to live life to the fullest. He was in danger of dying without realizing his potential to love. But to me this sounded very much like reason being brought in after the fact to drag duty kicking and screaming in a direction where it was not inclined to go. Otherwise, where was the conflict? Michele said that if we lost this one as well he would tear up his season ticket and chuck it onto the field.

Amazingly, Verona scored first. With the help of a very dubious piece of refereeing, Roma got an equalizer. But soccer, like the mind, is ever fluid. Like wayward thoughts, players head off in the most unexpected directions. There are sudden fizzes of conflict, and then, where it seemed there was only confusion, things come together in patterned felicity. Two passes, three, four, and suddenly two perfect triangles lay end to end. Verona had scored again. Ragged and incredulous, the boys soaked up the pressure and hung on with some heroic goalkeeping. For the first time, the crowd stood for a roaring ovation, mixed with chants of "*Roma, Roma, vaffanculo!*" Which corresponds roughly to "Fuck off, Rome." The aging idol and goal scorer Toto De Vitis came out to salute the crowd. How we love our players when they win! When they allow us to shout triumphant insults at opposing crowds. The stands were a sea of flags. Giorgio, who had bellowed throughout, had a beatific smile. "Maybe I won't leave home after all," he laughed. Such is the uplifting effect of a good win on the emotions. But the following week Verona lost, 2–nil, to lowly, very lowly Piacenza.

There are those who talk eagerly about the intelligence of their soccer idols, but the truth is that we adore these men for what they can do for our team and not for their off-field intelligence, which is probably inferior to that of almost everybody we despise: politicians, I mean, and coaches, too, sometimes. Giorgio, however, would not hear of any suggestion that his young Raffaella was not an unusually intelligent woman. She was simply the most perceptive and acute person he had ever spent time with. We were back in the stadium, and, as we spoke, the P.A. thundered out the tune that accompanies, at least a dozen times before every game, a long commercial for the Cesare Ragazzi Hair Replacement Method. The big screen opposite the south stand showed a once bald man, apparently Cesare himself, embracing a naked girl in an underwater situation that allowed us to see just how long and thick transplanted hair could be. The commercialization of midlife crisis can never have been cruder. Nor the target audience more appropriate. Why do men go to soccer matches if not to revisit their youth? There is an oneiric quality to it all. And it occurred to me, as Michele and Maria Giulia demanded a Coca-Cola, that perhaps beautiful young girls do get to seem more and more cerebral as middle-aged men go soft in the head.

It was December 22nd: the game against Udinese. After beating Rome, we had continued to lose our away games and had tied twice at home, against Vicenza and Sampdoria. Already the coach, Cagni, was striking that attitude of he who has faith despite all evidence to the contrary. Not unlike Marina, who was still unenlightened about the affair with Raffaella. Psychology was certainly becoming an important issue—as each week's program pointed out. Not that anyone was claiming we were one of the more skilled teams in Serie A. But if only the boys could get their heads together, they were not so unskilled as to lose without a fight. Giorgio told me that he was going home for a week at Christmas. One had to be with the children at Christmas, he explained. Raffaella would be with her boyfriend. Though very much in love with Giorgio, she was finding it difficult to fire her *fidanzato* until she was invited to share her life with her lover. Perhaps Marina is right to have faith, I thought. Perhaps Cagni is right. There is hope. And in a goalmouth scramble Udinese scored.

Was this the first game at which it occurred to me how problematic the psychology of the season must have been for Orlandini, Zanini, Maniero? Still young and at the height of their considerable powers, lent to Verona by big-name teams that had no room for them, these three rising stars must have felt at once frustrated by the mediocrity of their companions and at the same time assured that when the debacle came they would escape to some other team—the way in a faltering marriage men can feel confident that at forty-five it will be easier for them to start again than for their wives. Or the way beautiful and intelligent young women know they will come out of a torrid affair better than their aging lovers. But can one be fully committed, while at the same time preparing to bail out? Giorgio would check out the situation at home, he said at halftime, but didn't plan to stay. The referee was "*venduto*," Michele grumbled. "Paid off." He hadn't given us an obvious penalty.

Still, it's never over till it's over. A brisk break by Orlandini. Perfectly driven cross and Maniero's diving header. Goal! What rapture. Followed not ten minutes later by Udinese's second. There was a definitely unseasonable swelling of frustration and rancor in the stands now. We hated the Udinese supporter who had brought a drum along and was banging it loudly, hated our team for being so incredibly awful, hated ourselves for supporting it, for knowing that we would go on supporting it even after this game. But these emotions, too, are the price one pays in order to be more detached and noncombative through the week. With a team like this to hate, I told Giorgio, how can you possibly see your wife in anything but the most positive light? He frowned. Maniero was brought down in the box and we had a penalty. Orlandini. Goal.

The winter light had gone. The floodlights came on. Perhaps the approach of Christmas made the crowd suspect a miracle. Because Verona—and this is so

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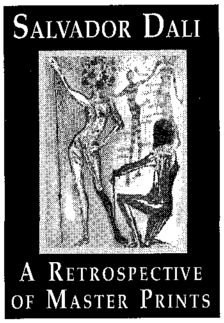

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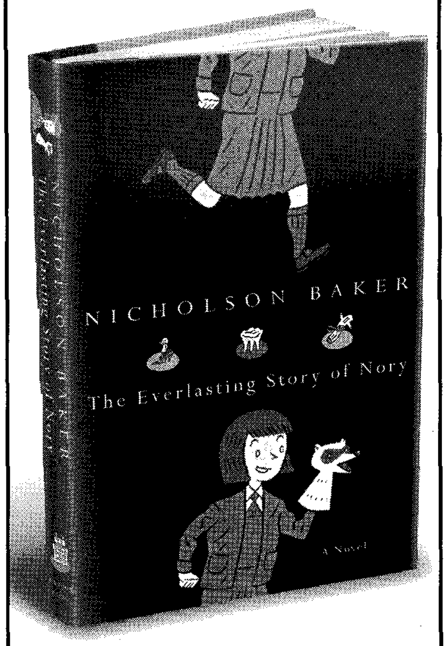

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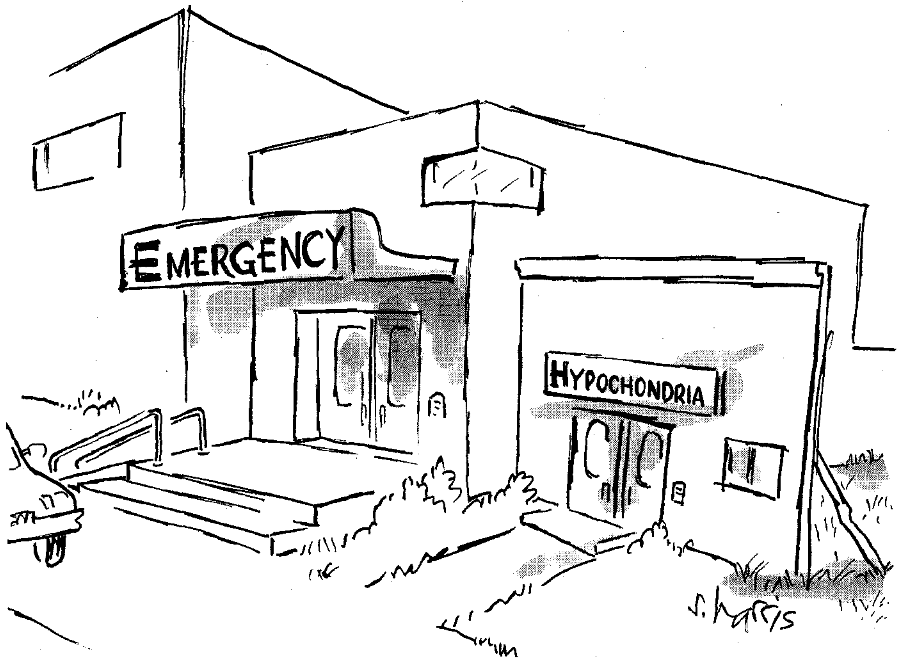
rare—had begun to attack. There was one of those great rising waves of hope in the crowd. For no particular reason everyone was shrieking "*Su! Su!*" "Up! Up!" Meaning "Upfield!" But we might have been inciting a corpse to rise from the dead. Appropriately, old Toto was wheeled on: our last-minute substitution. This declining star—or comet, I might say—gave us our Christmas present. He had the shrewdness to skip over a low cross on the edge of the six-yard box. The goaltender, already diving at him, was completely thrown, and big Maniero was there to receive it and slide it in. Three-two. I have never seen my son so ecstatic. Though he hates girls, he was hugging the rather attractive Maria Giulia, lifting her up and plonking her down. When the floodlights went out, the crowd remained, lighting cigarette lighters as if they were so many candles at a carol service. "*Adesso suona il tamburo!*" ("Now bang your drum!") we were singing, to the tune of "Guantanamera." The players threw their shirts into the stands. One threw his shorts. And when I got home I felt so happy to see the Christmas tree and my children and my wife and to think that all was well, I wept.

COUNSELLORS who try to save marriages insist that communication is the first step—getting each side to tell the other, honestly, how he or she feels. I've often observed how opposing groups of fans offer a triumphant image of thoroughly enjoyable non-comprehension. We yell "*Milan, Milan, vaffanculo!*" at the top of our voices. But no sooner have we begun than they are screaming. Drowning us out. So that each fan hears only what he wants to hear. And as long as both sides remember the theatricality of it all, and as long as formal arrangements keep them separated, this is an enormous, if infantile, pleasure. It is far more enjoyable than some intelligent discussion of the game with an opposing fan, which would probably involve the painful admission that his side is in fact superior to yours. But, in life, there are areas in which the painful admission is appropriate. Thus Marina had used Christmas to tell Giorgio that she realized she shared a great deal of responsibility for what had gone wrong between them and was eager to put that right, eager to love him better, eager to return to what she insisted had been happy years for both of them. "Remember this, Giorgio," she said. "Remember that." Her generosity took my friend by surprise. And frightened him. His response was to stay away from home for almost a month.

What a gloomy month it was! On the high of the Udinese victory, we went to our first away game: Atalanta, the Bergamo team. Verona defended throughout—as if you could ever improve your lot in soccer without scoring—while a couple of hooligans tried to scale the huge fence they'd put us behind to toss fireworks at the well-to-do Bergamaschi in their better seats. The police didn't miss the chance to use their truncheons. The temperature was below zero. And, of course, Atalanta bundled



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in a goal five minutes from time. Everybody was disgusted. "This is helping you to grow up," I told my son, casting about for some compensation. "It's important to get used to losing in life. It's important to learn to stick with things."

THE only reason we hadn't fired our execrable coach, Cagni, a well-informed fan told us before the game with Milan, was that we would still have to pay out his contract for the rest of the season. And Verona didn't have that kind of money. Giorgio, too, was being forced to count the cost of paying off an old contract. Both he and Marina had been to lawyers. Offer and counteroffer. She wanted three million lire a month. He was going to be relatively poor, he said. The team lists were being announced over the P.A., and I observed that even the players Milan had on the bench were worth more than twice our whole squad. And they had changed their coach the minute things started going wrong. What hope for our Verona?

One of the galling things about supporting a provincial team in Italy is that the stadium is only truly full when one of the big three comes along: Juventus, Inter, Milan. And it is not that it fills with fans from the big cities themselves, though there are those. No, the stadium fills with locals who actually support one of the big three—born-and-bred Veronese who wave Juventus flags, sport Inter scarves, or wear Milan shirts. Happily bereft of any sense of pathos, these people support only successful teams, the way some men have eyes only for the most beautiful and glamorous women. And, when the opportunity arises, they have their fling. Though to do so in one's own back yard, so to speak, is hardly in the best of taste. "We know your names!" the Verona hard core shrieked. "*Vergogna!*" Giorgio yelled. "Shame on you!"

It was only a matter of time, I warned Michele. How could a plain and muddling workhorse like Verona hold its own against all that glitz? "Just enjoy watching the real thing," I insisted, doubtless more nervous than he was. And Milan did play so beautifully, so sinuously. All those patterned passes. Two, three, four shots on goal. Until suddenly our own Orlandini was breaking from a Milan corner. He simply dribbled around the great Baggio. The whole field before him. Cross to Zanini. Goal.

Milan was surprised, but scarcely worried. The game settled down again into wave after wave of sophisticated attack. Perhaps ten missed opportunities. Until another break. A muddle in the goalmouth. Goal! 2–nil. And, just in case we still didn't believe it, Verona scored again. Our third and last shot of the game. What bliss.

"Too bad Maria Giulia wasn't here. Why's that?" I asked afterward. And Giorgio, who hadn't talked about his situation for some time, said it was no longer credible to tell the children that he was working in Bologna and could make it home only on Sundays, so he was now telling them he'd had to go to Rome for a month. Despite the business with the lawyers, it seemed that they still hadn't been informed of the breakup. "And you haven't got Raffaella to move in?"

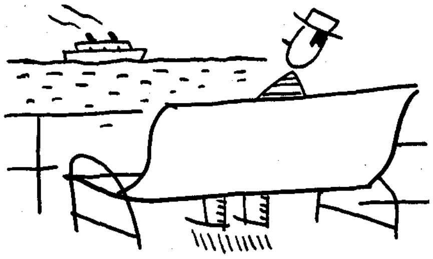
"No."

"So what are you doing?" He said he was paralyzed. He couldn't make a decision.

"If you don't make one, someone will make it for you," I said. How easy it is to give advice. The important thing was to sort things out, I said. If Verona could beat Milan, there was always hope.

"Perhaps it'll go to penalties," he said.

KIERKEGAARD defined "the knight of infinite resignation" as someone who has learned to accept the fact that his wishes cannot be fulfilled. The "knight of faith" also accepts this, but then goes one step further. Paradoxically, he still believes that he will have what he cannot: immortality. And it is this paradox, Kierkegaard says, that condemns he who has real faith to the "martyrdom of unintelligibility." Certainly Marina was becoming hard to understand when she spoke, quite serenely and practically now, about arrangements for their separation, while at the same time explaining that she was convinced Giorgio would come back to her. Certainly Cagni seemed at best incoherent when, in an unforgivably relaxed interview with the local TV station, he claimed that although he was perfectly aware that we were likely to go down, he nevertheless firmly believed it wouldn't happen. We would win our last games and stay up. It will be noble enough, I thought, if Michele and I become "knights of infinite resignation." "Don't hope," I told him, before the make-or-break game with Juventus. I was right. We lost 2–nil.



Analogies have to break down somewhere. The mind weaves its web across the world, seeking out similarities, tying together like and like, insisting, grasping, imagining it has understood. But if analogy didn't end, if two things were alike in every way, then they would cancel each other out, and so cease to exist, in a sense. "It's insulting," my wife said one evening, "the way you keep comparing Marina and Giorgio's troubles to the soccer season. It's ridiculous." And she was right. For in the end I really didn't give a damn if Verona went into Serie B. Or Serie C, for that matter. In the end, I couldn't give a tinker's curse whether we beat Milan or lost to Reggiana 10–nil. Whereas it would be a major cataclysm in four people's lives—no way around that—if Giorgio chose to leave his family for good. However exciting it is when the stands fill and the flags wave and the players chase brilliant colors over dazzling green, the stadium is only a small place in the larger universe of the mind—whereas a living room is huge, a child gigantic, and the bedroom a cosmos. "I only do that," I told my wife, "because it's the only way you'll let me talk about soccer."

So at the darkest moment of the season—mathematical relegation—Giorgio went home. Not beaten at all, but saying, "This is what I want, my marriage; this is what I choose." Triumphant, in fact. As if emerging from a shadow. From the enchantment of Raffaella. Or of my analogy. "How could I imagine I didn't love my wife?" he said. "How could I think of living away from the kids?" And as we sat among a dwindling and despondent crowd to see the last rites played out against Parma and the curtain come down on our flirtation with Serie A, he said, "Well, thank God I'm not going down." And he said, "Nothing easier than firing the poor girl when it came to it." Later that evening, when my own wife finally got off the phone with a very chatty Marina, I said gloomily, "And they've renewed Cagni's contract, too. Can you believe it? Does nothing ever end?"

"Let's drink to marriage," she said. Then she laughed. "For one more season." ♦

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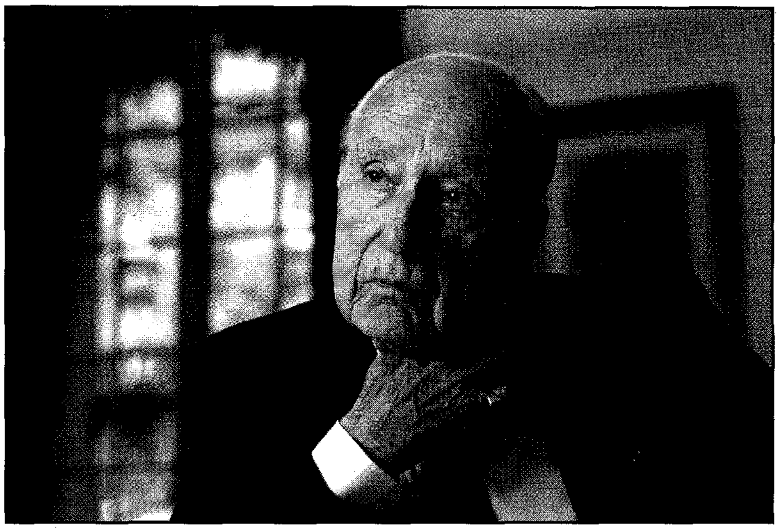
PARIS JOURNAL

PAPON'S PAPER TRIAL

A file is a person, a rubber stamp an Algerian, a fiche a condemned Jewish child. Papon was on trial. So, too, was the noble French bureaucracy.

BY ADAM GOPNIK



Here was, at last, a figure of sufficient Mephistophelian stature to excite a moralist.

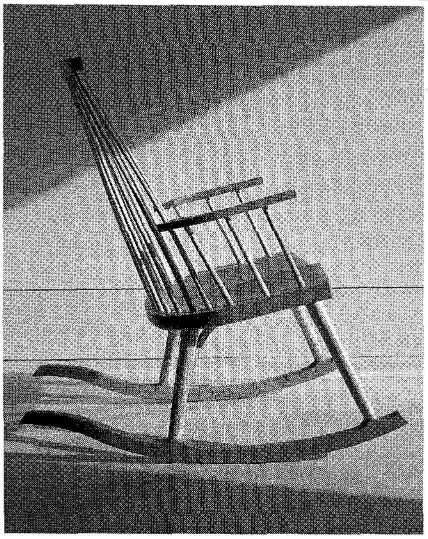
S. NOBOUT/GAMMA LIAISON

BORDEAUX is the town where France goes to give up. It was where the French government retreated from Paris under fire from the Prussians in 1870, and again from the Kaiser's armies in 1914, and where, in June of 1940, the French government fled in the face of the German advance and, soon afterward, met not just the fact of defeat but the utter depth of France's demoralization. A. J. Liebling wrote of those days that "there was a climate of death in Bordeaux, heavy and unhealthy like the smell of tuberoses." He recalled the wealthy men in the famous restaurants like the Chapon Fin, "heavy-jowled, waxy-faced, wearing an odd expression of relief from fear." Though the bad peace was ruled from the spa town of Vichy, Bordeaux is the place that gave the surrender its strange, bitter, bourgeois character—a nation retreating from cosmopolitan Paris back to *la France profonde.*

Bordeaux has always been a trenchcoat-and-train-station, nineteen-forties kind of town, and, despite the mediocre, concrete modern architecture it shares with nearly all French provincial capitals, it remains one. The Chapon Fin is still in business, but it is not deathlike—merely nervous and overwrought, in the way of French provincial restaurants since the capitalists trimmed down and the only market left was German tourists.

Not long ago, Bordeaux was invaded again, this time by battalions of lawyers, broadcasters, historians, and journalists, who had come to attend or participate in the trial of Maurice Papon—the former secretary-general of the Gironde, of which Bordeaux is the capital—for complicity in crimes against humanity fifty-five years ago, during the Occupation. The Papon trial was the central, binding event of the past year in France—a kind of O.J. trial, without television or a glove. It was the longest, the most discouraging, the most moving, at times the most ridiculous, and certainly the most fraught trial in postwar French history.

On the last day of the trial, Wednesday, April 1st, the invasion of the media became an occupation: what seemed like every European journalist resident in France, and a lot of Americans, too, descended on the little square outside the Palais de Justice. The convenience of having La Concorde, a stage-set



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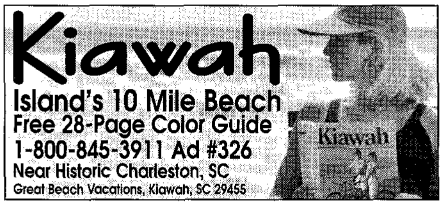

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grand café right across from the Palais (doors open to the spring weather, bottles of good wine lined up on the wall), gave the end of the trial a strangely hilarious, high-hearted, yet self-subduing party spirit—a combination of Swifty Lazar's Oscar party and the Nuremberg trials.

Despite the mob, the national allegiance of every journalist was instantly recognizable. French journalists wear handsomely tailored jackets and share with English rock guitarists the secret of eternal hair: it piles up. Americans, rumpled and exhausted before the day begins, seem to be still longing for Vietnam. Even walking up and down the steps of the Palais, they looked as though they were ducking into the backwash of a helicopter rotor, weighed down by invisible dog tags. What really depressed them was the knowledge that their stories about the *procès Papon* would sneak into the paper only "between blow jobs," as one said bitterly. The British alone were exhilarated, bouncing around in bad suits. They all speak French; they all knew they would be on the front page; and secretly they knew, too, that their readers would not be completely unhappy with a story whose basic point was that all foreigners were like that.

The great Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld waited outside the courthouse, too. He is in his sixties, spreading at the middle, and was dressed in a black jacket and cloth cap. "If Papon is found guilty, then the *appareil* of the state will be held responsible," he was saying to another journalist. "The French people will be saying that there is a limit, you must act on your conscience, even if you are a man motivated not by hatred but by procedures." Behind him, members of his group, the Association of Sons and Daughters of the Deported Jews of France, were reading out the names of Jewish children whom Papon was charged with having sent to their deaths.

A few moments later, three British journalists rushed into La Concorde, having just heard the accused man's last speech. Like all Papon's interventions during the trial, this one was sonorous, unremorseful, and full of literary and artistic reference. As soon as he finished, the three judges and nine jurors had gone to deliberate seven hundred and sixty-four questions of guilt or innocence, with a tray of sandwiches to see them through the night. The three Brits now sat down and ordered wine and roast chicken, and one began reading his translation of the speech as the others ate: "He said that it was a double scandal, something about Camus in here. Oh, yes, his wife's favorite writer was Camus." The reporter looked down at his notes and deciphered. "They killed his wife . . . I think." Papon's wife of sixty-six years had died, at the age of eighty-eight, the week before the trial was to end. " 'In their desperate . . . desperate search,' I think you'd put it, 'for a crime, they have killed her with . . . *petits esprits*.' What would you say? Small guns? Small steps? Little blows? Little blows. De Gaulle gave her a Légion d'Honneur. "

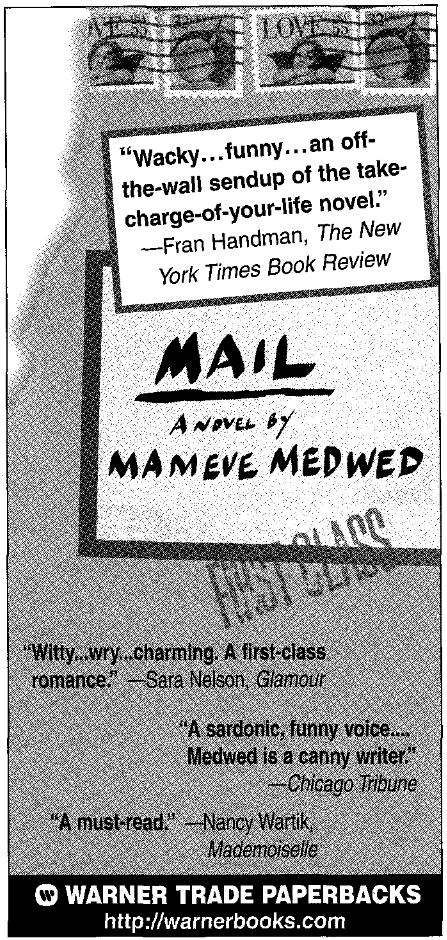
" 'With his own hands,' " one of the other journalists added, consulting *his* notes.

"Oh, yes. God, yes. 'With his own hands.' Then there was . . . Oh, yes. Here's when he turned to the prosecutor: 'Sir, you will go down in history—but through the servants' entrance!' " The reporter looked up, his eyes amused. "Well, that's not bad. Now something here about the absence of Germans. Oh, yes: 'Throughout the stages of this strange and surreal trial, there has been a notable absence of Germans.' A Notable Absence of Germans—sounds like a Michael Frayn play. Then something odd about Abraham sacrificing Isaac in Rembrandt, a ray of light? Staying his hand. Anyone get that?"

Everything came to a halt as a crowd of journalists who had gathered around the table tried to call to mind the light of an early Rembrandt, struggling to keep up with the tight web of cultural allusion spun by a French war criminal.

"Well, anyway," the British reporter resumed, "he called it the most beautiful light in painting. I still don't get it. He's comparing *himself* to the Jewish child about to be killed? Well, it's a point of view. Anyway, he stayed the hand. So that's it. Camus, his wife, no Germans, servants' entrance, bit about the light, Rembrandt, and then the sandwiches were sent in," he concluded decisively.

"Anyone see what *kind* of sandwiches?" an American reporter asked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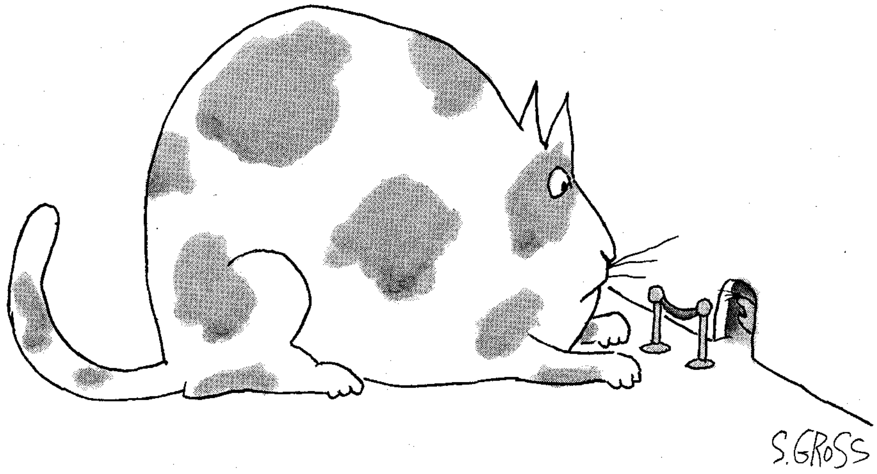


"Do you have a reservation?"

• •

anxiously. The Brits laughed. But a little later the man from the L.A. *Times* said that he saw the sandwiches go in, and he was confident that they were ham.

WHEN the French government in Bordeaux surrendered, in 1940, it was replaced by the right-wing Vichy government under the direction of Maréchal Pétain, the great French hero of the First World War. The Vichy regime passed anti-Jewish laws that summer, before the Germans had even demanded them. Two years later, at the Nazis' demand, Vichy began deporting Jews, including children, from all over the country. Although "only" twenty-five per cent of the Jews in France were sent to death camps, this is, as the historian Robert Paxton has pointed out, a derisive figure: Jews in France were the most assimilated in Europe. If there had not been *fiches* and dossiers in place at the prefecture, the Germans would have had a hard time finding Jews to kill.

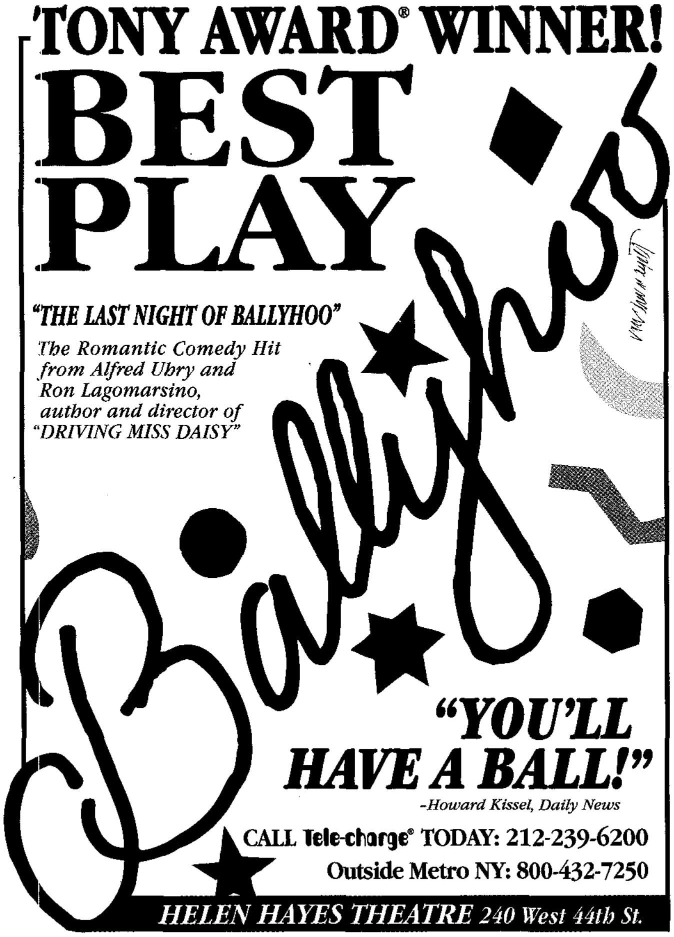
No one disputes that from 1942 to 1944 Maurice Papon, the secretary-general of the department of the Gironde, signed documents recording the arrest, assembly, and deportation of more than fifteen hundred Jews, including two hundred and twenty children. The *rafles* took place between July of 1942 and May of 1944. The documents show that the deportees, some French, some refugees from the East, were to be sent to the transit camp of Drancy, outside Paris. Then they were to go to a *"destination inconnue."* The unknown destination was Auschwitz.

Papon's history after the war is also public knowledge. By the end of 1943, Papon began to coöperate quietly with the Resistance, and even sheltered an important Jewish *résistant*. Then, at the Liberation, he delivered the prefecture to the Resistance, and, despite the complaints of a few locals, began a spectacular rise in the postwar French bureaucracy as an *haut fonctionnaire*. In the late fifties, he became the head of the prefecture of police in Paris and, in the seventies, Budget Minister in the government of Giscard d'Estaing. (The division between *hauts fonctionnaires* and politicians in France is fluid; there were five *hauts fonctionnaires* in the Cabinet that signed the armistice with the Germans. Today, forty-one per cent of the members of the National Assembly are civil servants on leave.)

Then, in 1981, Michel Slitinsky, a Bordeaux Jew who had escaped the deportations, met a historian named Michel Bergès, who had been doing work on the role of the local wine negotiants during the war. Bergès had stumbled on some interesting documents recording what the prefecture under Papon had been doing at the same time. Slitinsky eventually helped deliver the documents to the satiric newspaper *Le Canard Enchaîné*. Later, two more Bordelais, Maurice-David Matisson and René Jacob, made formal accusations against Papon. (A Frenchman can bring a charge against another Frenchman to the attention of a magistrate, who may then investigate it.) President Mitterrand did everything he could to delay the trial. French justice is under the control, or anyway the influence, of the President; Mitterrand may have felt that opening old Vichy cases was not in anyone's interest, especially his. It was only in 1995 that a formal indictment was handed down. Last October, Papon was brought from his house outside Paris to Bordeaux to stand trial.

THE trial began in October and was expected to end in December, but it went on until the *poisson d'avril*—April Fools' Day. The cast of characters in the courtroom, as the trial was reported in manic detail in the Paris papers, seemed noisy and fantastic. French courtroom decorum allows far more time than would be acceptable in an American or British court for free questioning, speechifying, digressive material, and moral instruction directed by whoever is in the mood to give it toward whomever he thinks deserves to get it. This lent the event an interestingly literary air. There was the lawyer for the accused, Jean-Marc Varaut, the author of grandiloquent books on famous trials: one on Oscar Wilde, one on Jesus. There was a stream of historians: Bergès, now bizarrely on the side of the defense; the universally admired American Robert Paxton, the greatest of Vichy historians; and Henri Amouroux, "of the Institute," the most well-known historian to appear for the defense.

There was Serge Klarsfeld, whose son Arno was one of the leading civil prosecutors in the trial. (In a French courtroom, four or five separate prosecution teams—some civil, some from the government—can all argue the same case, each in its own way.) Arno drove the other prosecutors crazy. At the last minute, he pleaded for a lesser penalty for Papon than *"perpétuité,"* the life sentence, demanded by the *parquet*, the prosecuting government authorities. And during the trial he led a move to have the presiding judge barred, on the ground that a relative of his had been among the deportees. (This may have been a preëmptive strike, to keep the defense from raising the same point.) Then, after the motion failed, he took it on himself to disassociate Papon from other, worse war criminals, like Paul Touvier and Klaus Barbie, whom his parents had also helped



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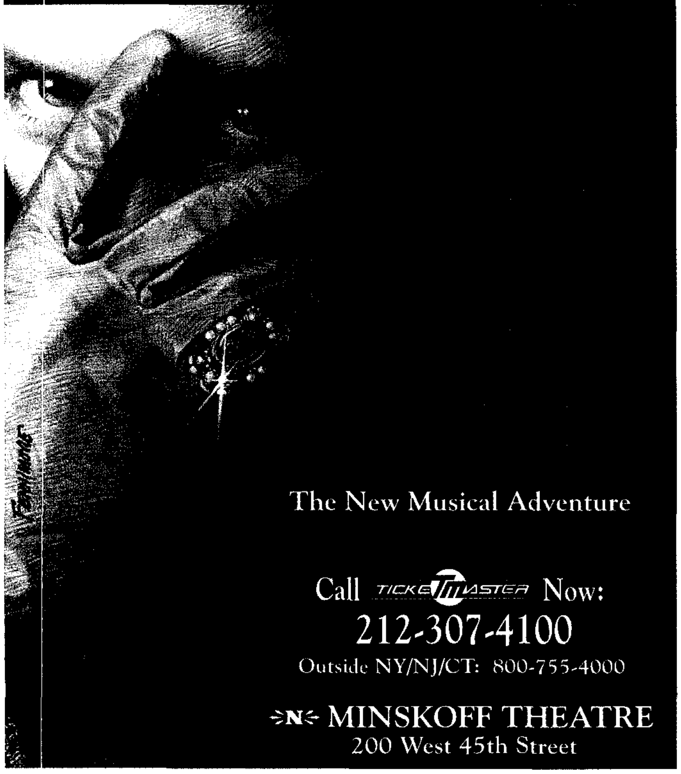

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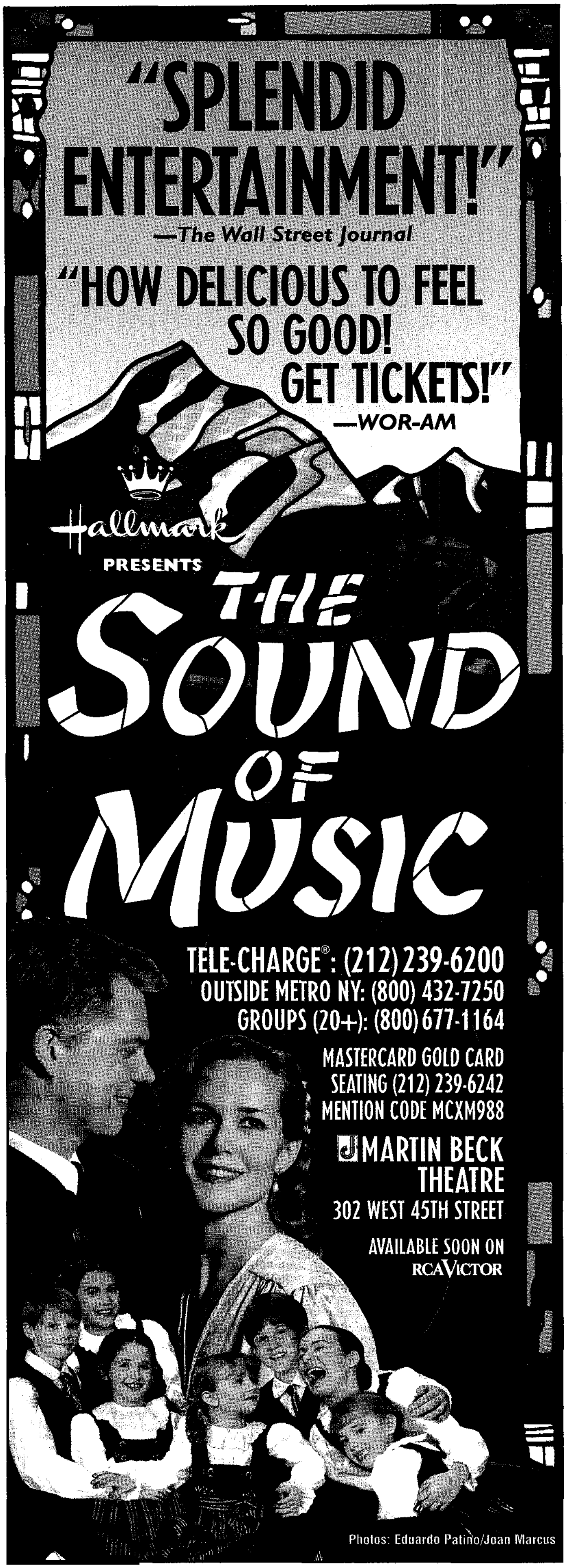

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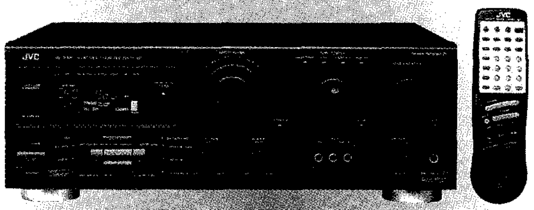

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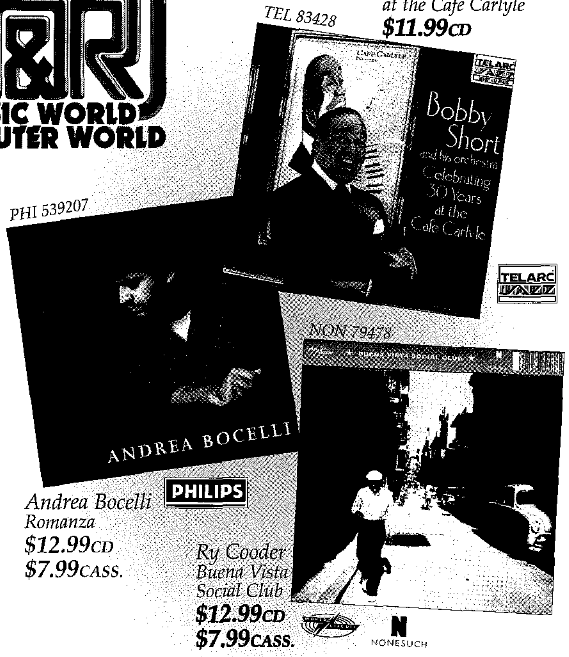

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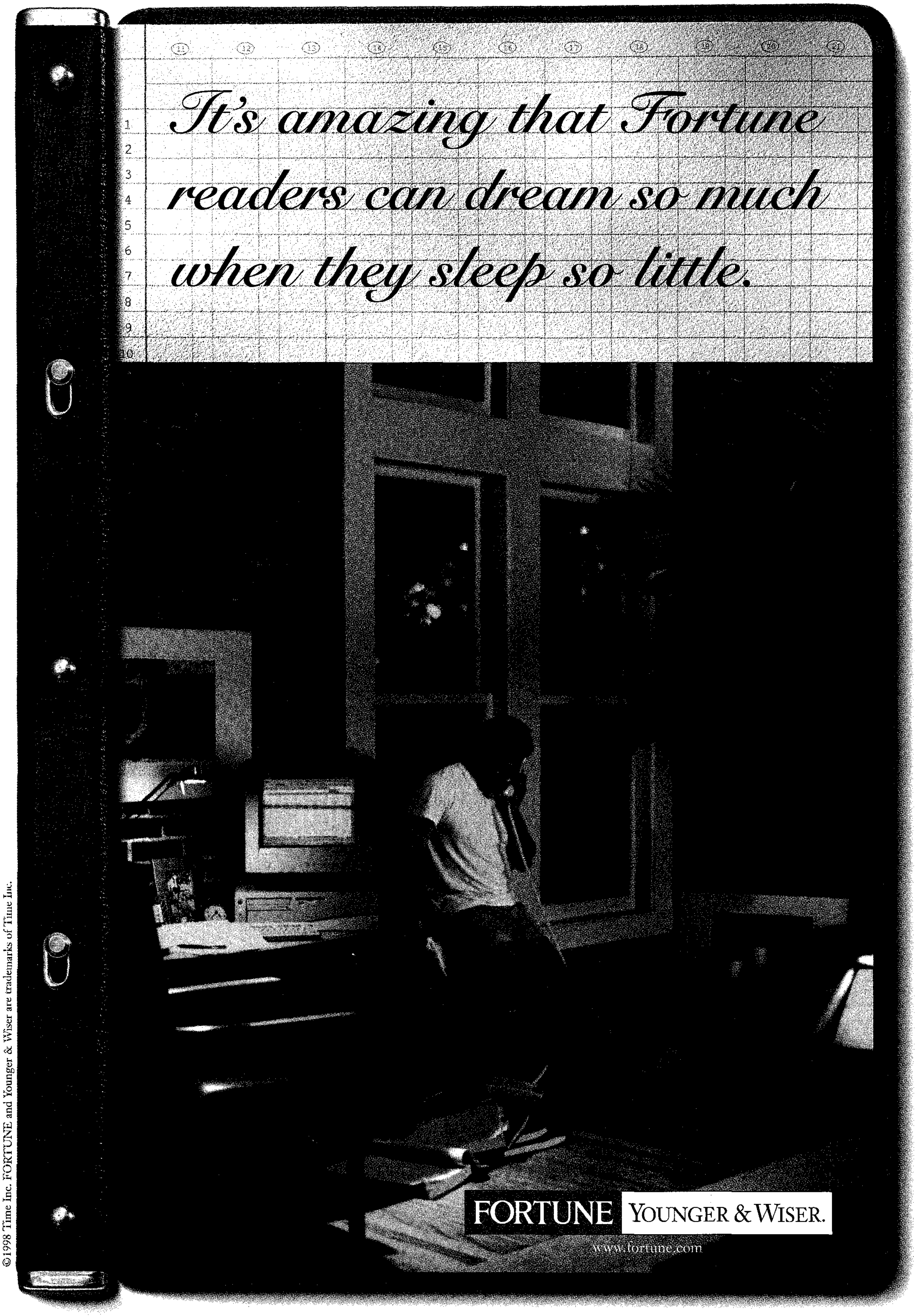
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bring to justice, announcing that, unlike them, Papon had merely signed papers. Since the whole point of the trial was to establish that signing papers was itself a crime, the other prosecutors understandably developed an even more intense dislike of Arno. Arno became the event of the trial. Out of the black robe and white kerchief that French lawyers still wear, making them look like perpetual Daumier drawings, he could often be seen in jeans, with his shirt hanging out. He is handsome, but in a modellish way, with too much hair and too open a collar. For a while before the start of the trial, he lived with the model Carla Bruni, and had been photographed in *Paris Match* with her on a romantic vacation in Venice. Most days, he arrived at the Palais on Rollerblades. Even in America, this would have been controversial. In France, it was regarded as just short of mooning the judges.

Above all, there was Papon himself, pompous and aging and erect and unrepentant. For the first time in a French war-crimes trial, there was a figure of sufficient Mephistophelian stature to excite a moralist. Papon may have been evil, but he was certainly not banal. According to the rules of French trials, he was allowed not just to speak but to pontificate, and from the courtroom came daily dispatches recording, in the sonorous, Gaullist tones of the high Estate, his views on the trial and the witnesses brought against him. "This testimony is moving in both its nature and the dignity with which it was given," he said of one witness. Or again, "I cannot help but express my emotion in the face of this sober, painful account. It brings back heart-wrenching memories."

The trial failed to clarify its subject, for reasons that were partly complicated and French, partly universal and human. The universal and human reason was that Papon was an old man being tried as an accomplice to murder. Complicity is hard to prove in any courtroom, and old men make bad culprits. Papon was sick—too sick, the doctors said, to be held in prison during the trial—and his wife was even sicker; after he went home for her funeral, there were those who thought that he might not come back. Whenever it seemed that the accusers had assured the necessity of his conviction, Papon stumbled, or fell sick, or a confused memory intervened, and one was reminded that here was a very old and decrepit functionary. Whenever one wanted to leave the verdict to the historians, one was reminded by some piece of heartbreaking evidence—a few words about a wife, a mother—that here in person was the instrument by which the French state casually delivered children to their murderers. We will have justice, said the ghosts. I will soon be one of you, said the guilty man. The trial went on for six months—too short a time to try Vichy, someone said, and too long a time to try Papon.

THERE is an idea, beloved of American editorialists, that the Vichy regime itself was on trial in Bordeaux, and that France was finally "confronting its repressed past." This is a myth. The French have been obsessed with the details of Vichy for at least twenty-five years. Almost every bookstore keeps a shelf of books devoted to these four years of France's thousand-year history. Frenchmen of the left and of the right long ago accepted that Vichy was made possible by the German Army but followed homegrown right-wing ideology, and was broadly popular.

What was on trial in Bordeaux was not Vichy but something more: l'État, the State itself, through the acts of one of its most successful representatives. The French war-crimes trials of recent years, from Barbie the Gestapo man to Touvier the militia man to Papon the *fonctionnaire*, have been moving closer to the heart of the French identity. The idea of "l'État," the State, and its representatives, the *hauts fonctionnaires*, has a significance in France that is incomprehensible to Americans, for whom it means, at best, the Post Office. L'État suggests far more than the mere sum of the civil service. It has the authority that the Constitution has in America, that the monarchy until recently had in Britain. (Serge July, of the newspaper *Libération*, has even referred to "the religion of the *fonction publique*.") The State is the one guarantor of permanence in a country where neither the left nor the right can quite accept the legitimacy of the other side.

In France, the State intervenes between the Nation, the repository of racial memory, beloved of the right, and the Republic, repository of universal rights, beloved of the left. Its presence lets them coexist: the State keeps the Nation from becoming too national, and the Republic from becoming too republican. In France, the State suggests the official, disinterested tradition of service, it means the functioning and unity of the country, it means what works. When one of the lawyers at the trial, trying to give an interview in English, was prompted with the word "civil servant" as a translation for what Papon had been, he repeated it, and then visibly gagged, as though he'd swallowed a bad oyster—the idea of associating the word "servant" with the social role he was describing was just too weird.

The cult of the State makes France run. Yet every cult comes at a price. The price of Constitution worship, as in America, is to make every personal question a legal question—so that every pat on every bottom, every swig on a bottle, and every pull on every cigarette seems likely to have, eventually, a law and a prosecutor of its own. The price of State worship, as in France, is that real things and events get displaced into a parallel paper universe—the State is possible only because everything has been neatly removed from life and put in a filing cabinet.

The abstraction extends into every corner of French life. The girl at the France Telecom store who is asked for a new fax ribbon finds it, places it on the counter beside her—and then spends fifteen minutes searching through her computer files, her inventory, for some evidence that such ribbons do in fact exist. The ribbon on the counter is an empirical accident; what counts is what is in the system. The reality is the list, the reality is the document. This French habit of abstraction, unlike, say, the German habit of blind obedience, is difficult to criticize, because it is linked to so many admirable things. It is linked to the French gift for generalization, for intelligent living, for the grand manner, the classical style. It not only makes the trains run on time; it makes them run on time to places one would like to visit. But it was this national habit of abstraction, with its blindness to particulars, that was, in a way, on trial.

The irony was that a French courtroom attended by the French political classes was the last place to defeat, or even to test, the compulsive habit of abstraction. The language of French lawyering, like the language of the Institute and the Academy, is an *étatiste* language. Inside and outside a French courtroom, abstractions pile on abstractions, and by the end you are so distracted that you are unable to face plain facts: children in a cattle car being delivered to a death camp. It was not just that you could not see the trees for the forest. It was that you could not see the forest because it was covered by a map.

So the documents involving deportations which bear Papon's signature might have been official orders authorizing actions, but—crucial difference—they might have been official memorandums, recording for the benefit of the regional prefect, Maurice Sabatier, who was Papon's boss, actions already taken, a type of document that belongs in a different filing cabinet. Bergès, the historian who found the documents, was persuaded to testify that this was in fact the case. Papon was, in his own words, a mere *téléphoniste*—a receptionist, taking messages and creating memorandums. Then what to make of Sabatier's delegating to him, among other things, responsibility for Jewish affairs? Ah, but—understandable, though lamentable, confusion—this Department of Jewish Affairs was a recording bureau, not to be confused with the governmental Department of Jewish Affairs, which organized the deportations and the convoys. Papon was responsible for Jewish affairs only in a secondary sense. Anyway, he did whatever he could to protect Jews: look at the memos in which he struggles to see to it that Jewish children are sent to their parents! But those children were being sent to parents who were already dead, and were therefore being sent to their own deaths. Where on paper can that be shown to have been understood? Within the paper universe of the pre-

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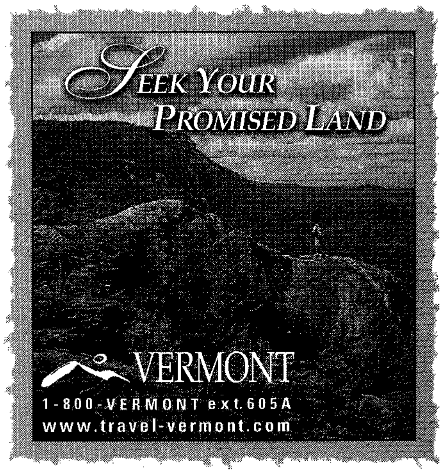

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fecture, the unorthodox act of attaching children's files to their parents' was an act of respect for families, whatever the sad distortion in the world outside. And Papon actually insisted that the cattle cars, *wagons à bestiaux*, be replaced with passenger cars. But if he was capable of ordering the change of cars then . . . No, here again you are confusing the technical decisions of the prefecture with the policy directives of Paris—or, in this case, of Paris and Vichy. In any case, Maître Varaut, Papon's lawyer, demanded, seizing on the prosecutors' uncertainty about how hard to press their case, how could one talk about degrees of guilt in a crime against humanity? Either one was implicit in mass murder or one was not. Any other claim was illogical. One could not be sixty per cent guilty, or thirty per cent guilty. The paper chain proved guilt or it did not.

Only the victims seemed quite real. Marcel Stourdze, a deportee who travelled back and forth from Paris to Bordeaux every day, in order not to miss a day, testified, "When I went back to Auschwitz after the Liberation, I saw that in an enormous vat they had saved all the hair. I thought that I saw the hair of my wife. Today, all that hair has become white. But at the time it still bore the color of those we had loved."

One of the shocks the trial offered involved the events not of 1942 but of 1961. At that time, when Papon was the head of the Paris police, the city and federal police had taken part in a massacre, in which approximately two hundred Algerian demonstrators died. It was toward the end of the Algerian war, and Algerians in Paris, sympathetic to Algerian nationalism, broke a curfew and marched to the center of the city. There had been Paris policemen killed in the preceding month, and, as the march pressed on, a kind of murderous free-for-all began. Many of the demonstrators were drowned in the Seine, bound hand and foot. (The details of this atrocity, which took place in the center of Paris, remain murky and obscure.) A partial glimpse of the records of the crime appeared only last fall, in the newspaper *Libération*.

This was regarded as good news for the defense—it showed that Papon had nothing particular against Jews—but it was also seen as an attempt by the left to equate the mistakes of the Gaullist regime during the Algerian civil war with the crimes of Vichy. What came to fill the gap of real issues was, inevitably, contemporary politics. The first people to feel the sting of the Papon trial were the Gaullists, and Philippe Séguin, the leader of the remaining Gaullist party, was the first political leader to denounce the trial. De Gaulle himself, Séguin felt, had come under attack. Papon, after all, had been allowed to continue in the *fonction publique*, and had been regularly promoted by Gaullist politicians.

The right discovered a response in an eight-hundred-and-fifty-page book called "Le Livre Noir du Communisme," the Black Book of Communism, which appeared last November, shortly after the Papon trial had begun. It is an encyclopedia of Communist atrocities around the world, from 1917 to the present, all scrupulously recorded and presented, with a tally of a hundred million deaths. The Black Book became the subject of a polemic, focussed indirectly, as everyone understood, on the *procès Papon*. Were the crimes of the Communists really comparable to the crimes of the Nazis? And, if they were, didn't that make the entire apparatus of international Communism, including, of course, the French Communist Party and its intellectuals—slavishly Stalinist for so long—"complicit" in another way, too? Were the *fiches* in the prefecture the only ones that mattered or could acts in that other paper universe, of poems and manifestos, be complicit in murder, too?

"Nifty apartment, divine food—and I thought your placement had some real sexual tension."

After the jury retired, the journalists waited for the verdict at La Concorde. The wine was good, a generic Merlot, and every table was taken. Nine o'clock became ten, the clouds of smoke thickened, and the gaiety rose as, one by one, filing deadlines for the next day's paper passed. Twelve o'clock and the French journalists are off the hook; three o'clock and the Brits are off! Only the Americans are going to have to file late tonight, no matter what. But then, around three-thirty, the big news comes in. The Paula Jones case has been dismissed; whatever anyone files is now set for page 2. Mildly annoying to the newspapermen, this news is disaster for the independent television crews. "I can hear them now," one cameraman says moodily, deep in his cups. " 'Ship it, ship it.' " ("Ship it" meaning, "Don't even try to

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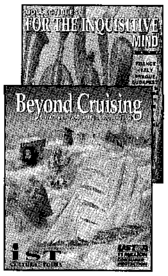

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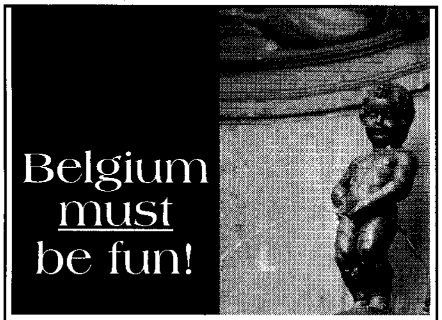

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put it on the satellite," is the TV equivalent of "We'll call you.")

The owners of La Concorde had learned, over the months of the trial, that American journalists cannot be outdone in their pitiless pursuit of truth and blank restaurant receipts. To cries of "*Fiche, fiche, fiche,*" the waiters slap one down with every order. A gloomy Dutch newspaperman at one table is telling stories about how often he has broken big stories, but in Dutch. "No one knows. No one cares," he says. "Cheesus could come back tomorrow, but if he comes to me they'll only know it in Amsterdam."

The British journalists, deadlines gone, drink whiskey and begin to reminisce about other, kinder war-crimes trials, where you didn't have to stay up all night for the verdict. "Take the Barbie trial," one says. "Everyone knew what the verdict would be, but the jury waited until just after midnight to announce it—that way, they got an extra day's pay, six hundred francs. We all went out and got drunk with the jury and the lawyers, and then we filed and were all on the boat train home and back in London in time for dinner. Now, *that* was a trial for crimes against humanity that wasn't a crime against humanity."

The Klarsfelds wander in and out, waiting for the verdict like everyone else. They have been cast as wreckers, loose cannons, pursuing some odd, private agenda. Seeing them together, certainly, one finds the connection between stolid, impassive father and mercurial son hard to grasp. Daniel Schneidermann, a television journalist who has written a book about the trial, argues that the horror of their family history—Serge's father was a deportee who died in Auschwitz—has left an "emptiness" inside Arno, the emptiness of a world that, since the Holocaust, has been abandoned by God. It is probably true that Arno's aggressive gestures—the Rollerblades, the jeans, the rude interjections in court—are meant to show a certain distaste for the whole pompous system, for the parallel paper universe in all its dignity. But it is also possible that, metaphysics aside, the Klarsfelds just have a shrewder take on the possibilities of the trial than their more sophisticated confreres. They understand that only an "intermediary" penalty, only some finding of guilt for Papon clearly distinguished from the great guilt of the real killers, will seem plausible to a Bordeaux jury. They are struggling to articulate, in the rhetoric of the courtroom, that there are gradations of guilt, styles of complicity, even in the Holocaust. To treat Papon as though he were equivalent to S.S. killers, like Barbie, is, in a sense, to draw a line again around the killings, with pure evil on one side and innocence, by implication, safely on the other.

Among the people and the talk and the stories, one bald, hard-looking man in his seventies, drinking his cognac and coffee, never leaves his table. "Who is he?" a newcomer asks. "Nobody knows," one of the women from the wire services answers. "He's been here every day since the trial began. He hassled some of the women, but then he gave it up." She lowers her voice. "A lot of us think he may be the man from the F.N." The F.N., the neo-Fascist National Front, is the phantom of Vichy that everyone wishes would go to sleep.

At four-thirty in the morning, it was announced that the verdict would arrive at eight. A lot of the American reporters went back to their hotel rooms, opened their windows to let in the French spring air, and turned on CNN to watch the news about the Paula Jones dismissal. It was hard, one reporter commented afterward, not to think about the extravagant good fortune of a country that had trials like that to worry about. Another, watching James Carville and Susan Carpenter-McMillan on "Larry King," said that he found it hard, particularly after months of trying to decode French verbal combat, to remember which was which: Did the two Americans on TV actually hate each other, despite the smileyness and forced good humor? Or was the hatred the pretense, and the reality the professional prizefighter's camaraderie? He had, he said, been away from America too long to remember.

By eight, everyone was back at La Concorde. Serge Klarsfeld was waiting, too. Someone asked one of the Brits, who had been there all night, if anyone had any instincts about what was to happen.

"None," he said.

"No one was persuaded?"

"No one was sober," he replied.

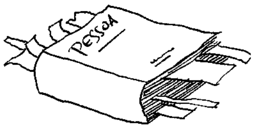
Shortly after nine, a middle-aged woman rushed into the café. She was stout, and squarely built, and was bent over as she ran. She had both palms held out straight in front of her, fingers spread. It was a strange, lamenting posture, like that of a Greek mourning figure.

She ran over to Klarsfeld. He nodded and wept briefly, and they held each other. Ten! The spread fingers meant that Papon had been given ten years. "And everyone against us," Klarsfeld muttered. It was a victory for him and for Arno; the jury had found Papon guilty of complicity in crimes against humanity, but not of mass murder.

Outside, the children of the deportees came to meet Klarsfeld, clasping one another and kissing cheeks. They were stout and old and plain: evil may sometimes be banal, but virtue, to its credit, always is.

In front of the courthouse, the argument had already begun. "It isn't enough of a penalty!" someone cried. "You go serve ten years," Klarsfeld said, pushing him gently. The stout lady kept saying, "It was double or nothing, the *parquet*"—the government prosecutors—"wanted double or nothing." She said "double or nothing" in English. Klarsfeld said, "He was not Touvier, and he was not Barbie. The ultimate *responsables* were the Nazis. After you have looked a real Nazi in the eye, you know the difference with Papon." For the most part, the civil parties and the reporters who had been with them for six months were disappointed. "Ten years! Ten years is what you give a housebreaker," one exhausted French journalist said.

SOMEHOW, back in Paris, the verdict seemed more tolerable. Paradoxically, the trial had concentrated so exclusively on Papon's role in Bordeaux in the forties that it had redrawn his picture, making him once again a mere prefect. In reality, he had not been one more face among the *fonctionnaires* but one of the highest, one of the great men of state, a Cabinet Minister. But this was a Paris reality, not a Bordeaux one, and it was only back in Paris, where the ministerial Papon could be recalled, that the scale of the achievement in Bordeaux registered. A great man of state, protected by the state, had been pursued for crimes by pitifully ordinary people—and despite that he had, at last, been held responsible. It wasn't the victory over abstraction that Camus had died dreaming of. But this time nobody gave up.



In a way, the jury in the Palais de Justice had even, over sandwiches, used their imaginations to make some necessary retrospective law, and they had done it well. By saying that Papon didn't know where the trains were going, and also saying that he was guilty of crimes against humanity, they were making the right and courageous point. To deliver a child to the secret police is as large a crime against humanity as you ever need to find, no matter where he is going, or what kind of car he is going to travel in. The men with stamps and filing cabinets now couldn't plead procedure any more than soldiers could plead orders; the *appareil* of the State would have to understand that their *fiches* represented people, whether they were Jews or Algerian demonstrators or refugees yet to come. The parallel paper universe now had a window. ♦

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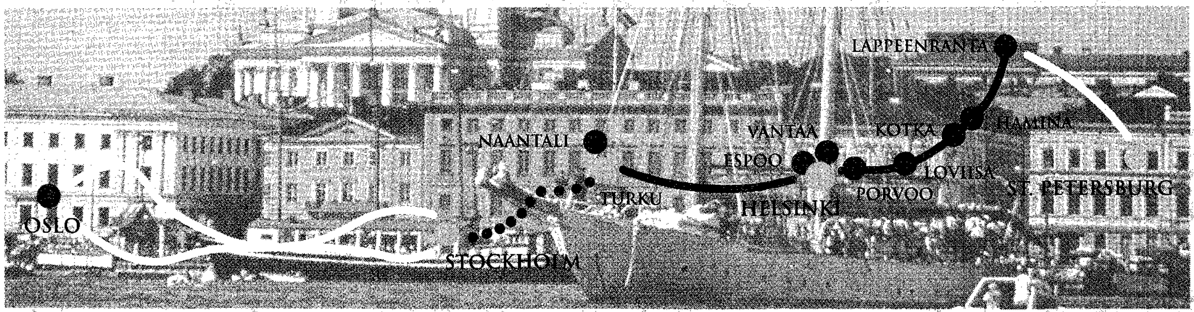

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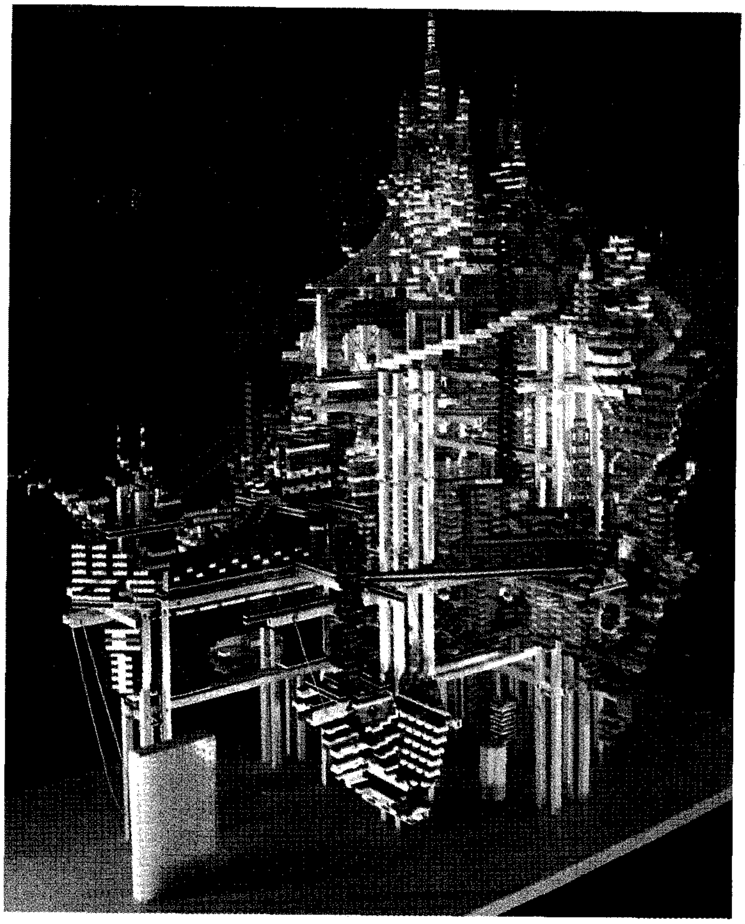
THE JOY OF BRICKS

What have the Danes done for children?

BY ANTHONY LANE



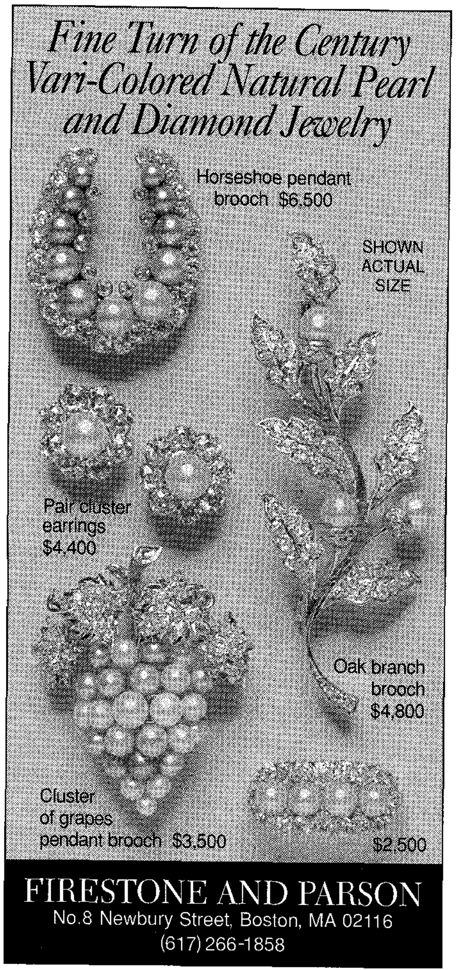
Norman Mailer's Lego city, a futuristic Mont-Saint-Michel, which sits in his living room.

SIMEON C. MARSHALL

TAKE a brick. Look at it. Is it plastic? Does it have eight knobs on top and three tubular holes underneath? Is it, would you say, molded to a tolerance of five-thousandths of a millimetre? If so, you are probably holding a piece of Lego. If you're still not sure, gather five more bricks of the same design and start clicking them together. Take your time. If you discover that there are a hundred and two million nine hundred and eighty-one thousand five hundred ways in which those six pieces of plastic can possibly be combined, then Lego it is.

During the past forty years, some three hundred million children have played with Lego, and it is estimated that in the course of a single year these children spend five billion hours amid the bricks. At last count, Lego had filled the world with a hundred and eighty-nine billion molded elements. Most of them, given the unbreakable longevity of the product, must still be in circulation. Half, as far as I can make out, are in my attic.

The rule that governs any self-respecting box of old Lego is that it should contain not just single bricks but the exciting debris of half-made projects: a three-wheeled chassis, a robot's lonely torso, a plastic Piranesi ruin. I find it heartbreaking to comb through the bricks of my childhood—not because the click of stud into hole promises, like the uneven flagstones in the courtyard of the Guermantes mansion, a Proustian retrieval of lost bliss but simply because I am touched to discover that even when I was six my engineering concepts were



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crap. Lego posed a formidable challenge: being essentially curveless, it seldom bothered with anything as fancy as aerodynamics. That was how we liked it, of course. Roundness was for slackers.

These days, I gaze in disbelief at what Lego has become. There are currently four hundred and thirty-three different Lego sets available, two hundred and seven of which came out this year. I recently spent a day cruising the Lego department of F. A. O. Schwarz, on Fifth Avenue, discovering such delights as the Riptide Racer, the Speed Splasher, and the Fright Knights. I could choose between Lego Primo, for infants; Duplo, for children one and a half and older; Technic, for those aged seven and up; and something called FreeStyle, which seemed to mean a load of Lego bits thrown into a bucket, like chicken wings. Even the basic backbone of the product line, Lego System, comprised a number of subsets, such as Aquazone, U.F.O., ResQ, Castle, Extreme Team, and the daringly antiquated Town and Boats.

All at sea, I enlisted the aid of Jason Bligen, F. A. O. Schwarz's eagerly clued-in Lego manager. I was tempted by the Dark Forest Fortress, but Bligen demurred. "Oh, that's really old stuff," he said.

"How old?"

"Year, year and a half."

Hotter by far was the new range of Adventurers, which was released in January. For forty dollars, I could have had the high-tech Mummy's Tomb, but it was clear that its designers were cashing in on "Stargate," and I wasn't in the market for merchandising. After deep deliberation, I plumped for the Cyber Saucer—a hundred and thirteen pieces, and mine for only $21.99.

Back in the safety of my bedroom, I made my Saucer. It took eighteen minutes. I encountered no major construction problems; Lego instructions, wordlessly international, are known to be among the clearest in the world. (The Swedish furniture manufacturer Ikea approached Lego for advice on this point.) And yet I can't say that I had any fun. The path from components to finished product was so smooth, and so hostile to improvisation, that I felt less like a child at play than like the last man on the assembly line.

This is the nub of the charge—half lament, half complaint—that older Lego lovers level at the company of today. It is voiced most ardently by Bug, a computer jock in Douglas Coupland's novel "Microserfs":

> You know what really depresses the hell out of me? The way that kids nowadays don't have to use their imagination when they play with Lego. Say they buy a Lego car kit—in the old days you'd open the box and out tumbled sixty pieces you had to assemble to make the car. Nowadays, you open the box and a whole car, pre-fucking-built, pops out—the car itself is all one piece. Big woo.

I went back to my Saucer, took it apart, and stared at the pieces. An hour later, I had turned it, or tamed it, into a cat and a mouse. The pivoting antennae from the spaceship were now the cat's whiskers. My rodent had black radio-dish ears, like Mickey's, and a revolving abdomen. I had applied my imagination to New Age Lego, but I was still stranded with four large sloping panels of plastic. Plugged together, they had formed the body of the ship; unplugged, they were totally useless. Big woo.

One hardly needs to point out the steely commercial wisdom that underpins Lego's new marketing and design practices: ten or twenty years ago, a mother who gave her son or daughter a midsized, brick-based Lego kit could watch it go through countless transmutations without the need for further investment, whereas a mother who shelled out for a pair of green and purple Lego Technic Jaw-Tong Slammers last Christmas will have to reach Buddhist levels of quietude by August if she is not to cave in to raucous demands for the new Insectoids Arachno Base and Beetle Pod.

"The new stuff is a slap in the face for old Lego," I was told by an advertising executive who works on the Lego account. "What matters now," he said, "is not Lego the product but Lego the name—how to spread the brand."

Last year, for the first time, the Lego Group published "selected key figures." Its turnover in 1996 was 7,534 million Danish kroner ($1,267 million), which left a profit after tax of 470 million kroner ($79 million), or 6.2 per cent of earnings, down 0.1 per cent from the previous year. According to a company report, this just isn't good enough: although Lego is now sold in a hundred and thirty-eight countries, "earnings are not satisfactory in the light of our long-term objective to self-finance the operations and investments that we believe to be right and necessary." Lego is bigger

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FROM THE END

And then they set a huge table, and a magnificent wedding feast took place. That day the princess was even more beautiful than usual. Music played. Girls as lovely as moons danced below.

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—Zbigniew Herbert

(Translated, from the Polish, by John and Bogdana Carpenter.)

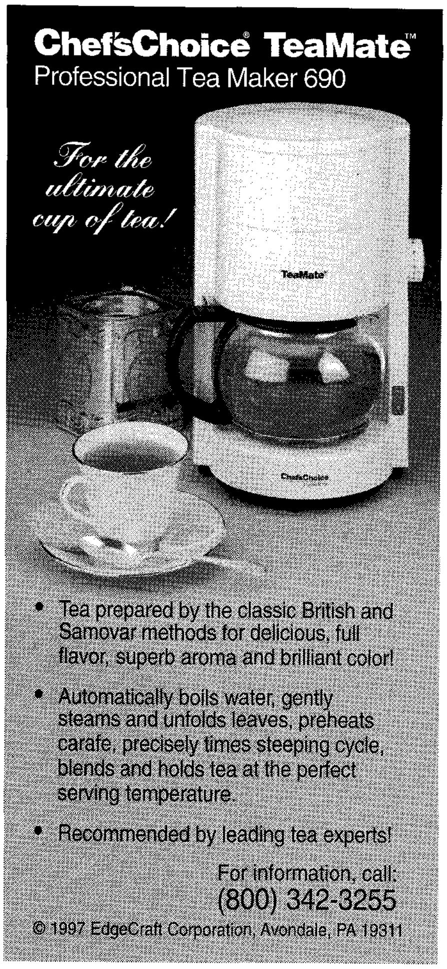
and brighter than ever, but nobody can be sure that it's getting better; meanwhile, rivals such as the Pennsylvania-produced K'Nex are squaring up and watching their profits rise. In the moving words of the Lego catalogue: "Build the two opposing slammers and then prepare to compete."

Lego began life in 1932, in the workshop of a poor, God-fearing Danish carpenter. If that sounds like something out of Hans Christian Andersen, it may be because the woodworker in question, Ole Kirk Christiansen, lived in Billund, which is only a couple of hours' drive from Andersen's birthplace, on the island of Funen. Fly to Copenhagen and en route you will see a soft landscape dotted with neat villages that look oddly familiar; as I peered down at the red roofs of the notoriously pretty Ærøskøbing, my ideas about Lego turned gently upside down. I had always presumed that a brick is a brick is a brick. Lego seemed so anonymous and ubiquitous that it could have come from anywhere. But, in fact, it was, in its formative years, a distillation of Denmark: every time you got your bricks out, you were founding a miniature Northern European welfare state—bright of hue, placid of demeanor, basically solid but given to occasional disturbing creaks. To the rest of us, Lego looks like toytown. To the Danes, it must sometimes feel like home.

Ole Kirk Christiansen made wooden toys for a living. (He also made stepladders and ironing boards.) The Lego company started using plastic in 1947, and dealt in it exclusively after 1960, when its wooden-goods warehouse burned down. Part of Christiansen's genius was to make the new material feel almost as comforting, as domestically reliable, as wood itself. There was nothing very natural about cellulose acetate—or, later, about the more stable acrylonitrile butadiene styrene that replaced it—but until recently a certain folksiness still clung to the image of Lego.

Christiansen's other masterstroke came in 1934, when he held a competition among his employees to choose a company name, and won it himself. "Lego" is a contraction of the Danish "*leg godt*," or "play well," and it's one of those blessed names, like Coke or Kodak, that get their hooks in the auditory imagination and never let go. Rivals have failed to devise anything that can boast a fraction of this universal snappiness: the Lego headquarters, in Billund, sports a fabulous display of Lego ripoffs, including Bildo, Blocko, Loko, Moto, Klip, Polly Plus, Hobby Land, Playgo, LocBlocs, OK, NA, and the tragically unambitious Toy. There is even one product called Ego, which is presumably all stud and no hole.

The Christiansen dynasty still runs Lego. Ole Kirk died in 1958, the year that saw the patenting of the brick we know and love, and Godtfred, one of his four sons, took over; it is Godtfred's son Kjeld who runs the Lego Group today. In the same spirit, Billund remains the hub of the Lego universe. Since 1968, millions of people have come to this place, some-



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VILLE ET VILLAGE

times more than twenty-five thousand in a single day—for Billund is, among other things, home to Legoland, the original, hundred-thousand-square-metre theme park. Its main attraction is Miniland, where selected highlights of the known world are reproduced in Lego. When I toured the park on a forlorn and gusty day, Washington was in turmoil. Someone had lifted the lid off the Capitol. Same old story.

THE Lego experience—three parts charming and inventive to one part creepy—starts the moment you touch down at Billund Airport. I collected my bag, walked over to the Information Bureau, and asked the woman in charge where I could catch the shuttle bus into Legoland. "The bus is waiting outside," she said. She paused, then added, "There will be small people on the bus." I gazed long and hard into her eyes for the tiniest sign of mockery, but they shone with clear, unsmiling innocence. I thanked her and went to meet my fate among the small people.

Ah! Cruel destiny! There were small people on the bus, but they were not, as I had fondly hoped, arrayed inside with fixed plastic smiles and their asses clipped to the seats. Instead, they were simply painted on the outside, and I travelled alone with my disappointment to Hotel Legoland. Nothing in Billund is more than a short haul from anything else; to get from the church to the supermarket to the civic center (endowed with Lego money) you drive at a sensible speed along ludicrously quiet streets, halting courteously at little roundabouts to allow other friendly drivers to pass by. At the side of the road, you keep seeing giant Lego bricks—perfect eight-studs, magnified a hundred times and piled up like Claes Oldenburgs. By the time you reach Hotel Legoland, the visual jokes have become addictive. But the most vertiginous moment of illusion, which would have reduced E. H. Gombrich himself to whimpers of satisfaction, came as I strolled into the bar and ordered a cocktail. In a pitiful attempt at Roger Moore-style sophistication, I turned to raise my glass to the man who was noodling away on a grand piano, then realized that he was made of goddam Lego. Even the "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door of my room showed a grinning little Lego man lying wide awake in a single bed with two plastic hands peeking over the edge of the blanket—a tomb-like position that I dutifully assumed, and maintained, for an entire night.

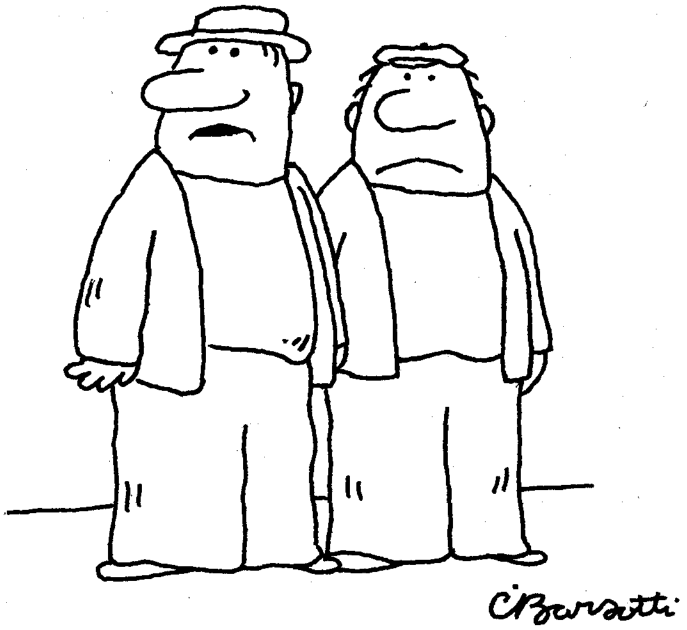
Over at the modelling department the next morning, I stopped at the workbench of Malene Helbak. She was dressed in black, with an earring clipped to the upper rim of one ear. Music flowed from a boom box by her side, and she was being paid to play with Lego all day. I gazed at her and thought, *You have the best job in the world.*

Helbak was making a tall, plump bird.

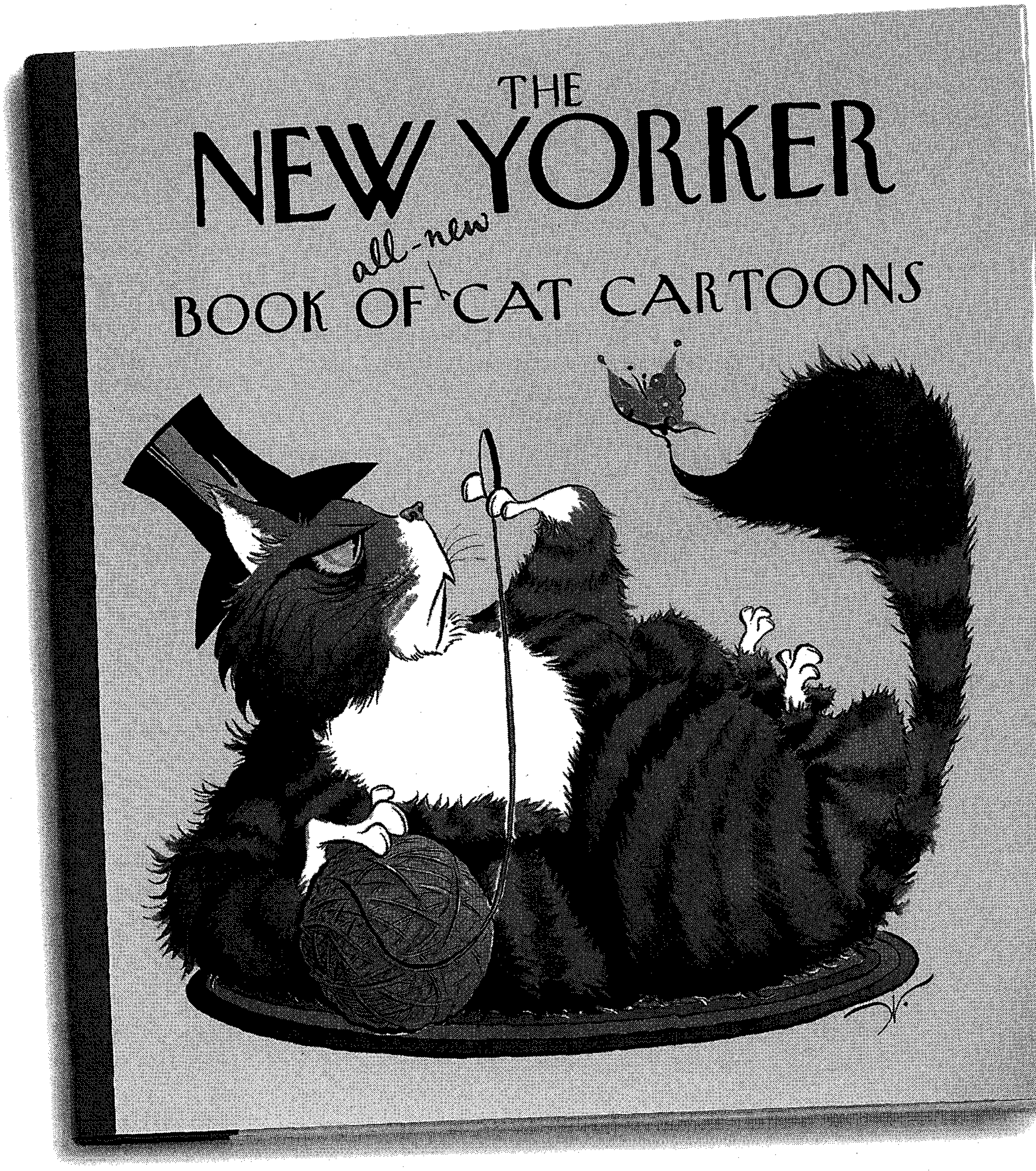
"Penguin?" I asked.

"No, fanfare pigeon," she said. I asked what a fanfare pigeon was.

"A pigeon playing a fanfare," she



"There, there it is again—the invisible hand of the marketplace giving us the finger."



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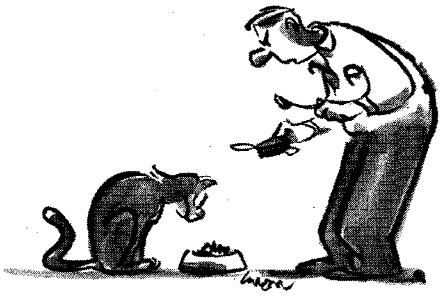

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replied, reducing me to Lego Primo with a single look.

Almost none of Helbak's work was done on a computer; she simply looked at the image of a pigeon, drew it by hand on Lego graph paper, and started building. Some Lego designers had been artists in a previous life; some had been architects; and one, Søren Lethin, had been a journalist. There is a God after all.

Lethin was a Lego nut as a kid, and nothing has changed. He is now a product consultant for Lego's Shows and Events section, where one-off company display models are invented. We inspected some of his achievements, including a grungy four-foot rock star complete with shades, goatee, and guitar. "Gibson Les Paul," said Lethin proudly. Press a knob and the rocker starts to play; for all I know, you could program him to throw televisions and to pee on your children's heads. The dexterity of such modelling is beyond belief. During the course of my trip I saw a dachshund, a lunar module, the Doges' Palace, the Holy Family at rest, and the rather Clinton-like spectacle of a happy yellow monster whose nose turns into a saxophone. Lethin told me that he had once worked on a Lego Michael Jackson. "It's fabulous what you can do with plastic," he said with a smile. What is required is a kind of modular alchemy. When would-be master builders audition for Lego, they are given a pile of bricks and asked to make a perfect sphere. Then they have to turn it into a head. One guy produced a flawless Teddy Roosevelt and was told to take it away, dismantle it, and come back with Carmen Miranda.

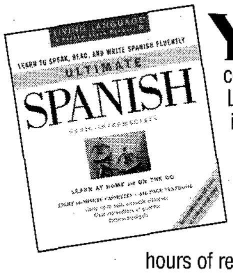
If this all sounds too much for mortals, consider the Lego World Cup, at which selected children are invited to Billund and allotted two hours and a stash of bricks to conjure a creation of their choice. One Italian girl produced a game of Lego Ping-Pong, and was asked how she had thought of it. "Well, I was planning to make a gondola," she confessed, "but there were no black bricks."

ONE reason that children have long treasured the order and flexibility of Lego is, perhaps, that the realm of play is one of the few areas of life where control has not become a dirty word. Among his or her bricks, the child is an absolute deity, forging coherence out of chaos and then reversing the process. If that omnipotence were to lurk and linger into adulthood, however, we would all be in trouble. Hence the nasty black comedy that hangs around the work of the Polish artist Zbigniew Libera.

In 1996, Libera was given a consignment of bricks by Lego distributors in Poland, which he used to construct a Lego concentration camp. The model was photographed, and its image was pasted onto a fake Lego box, with a fake Lego serial number, to give the impression that concentration camps were now part of the official Lego product line. When the boxes were exhibited in a Copenhagen art gallery, the Lego company understandably cried foul, but had the good sense not to sue. Libera's conceit is a respectable one, and, insofar as there is any sting to the work's satire, it comes from the sober (if unexceptional) fear that nothing—not even the Holocaust—is immune to our demand for entertainment.

In the end, Libera's Lego art seems too obvious to be shocking, and the company can count itself unlucky to have been singled out as a moral mercenary. Why mock the potential of Lego and leave the Power Rangers unscathed? In comparison with many other toy companies, Lego feels benevolent toward the aspirations of the creative, and tolerates what it calls "foreseeable misuse." Denmark, after all, favors freedom of expression as rampantly as the other countries in Northern Europe—perhaps on the understanding that only a minority of its citizens would even dream of abusing that liberty.

Legomakers everywhere have availed themselves of this opportunity. If you had to name one American, for instance, who clubbed together with a couple of friends in 1965 and spent more than three weeks building a futuristic seven-foot vertical city out of Lego, you might not immediately think of Norman Mailer. Thirty-three years later, however, the city still stands in Mailer's living room in Brooklyn Heights, and its creator remains enthusiastic about his project. "It was very much opposed to Le Corbusier. I kept thinking of Mont-Saint-Michel," he explains. "Each Lego brick represents an apartment. There'd be something like twelve thousand apartments. The philosophers would live at the top. The call girls would live in the white bricks, and the corporate executives would live in the black." The cloud-



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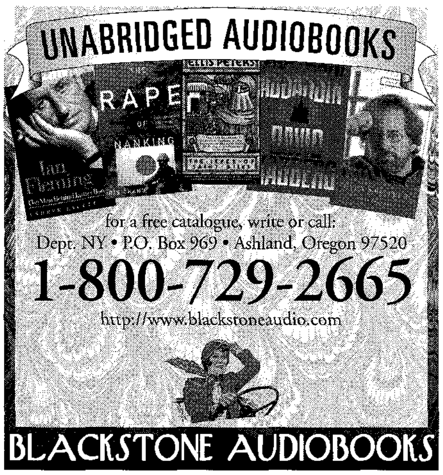

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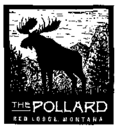

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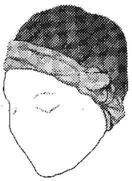

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level towers, apparently, would be linked by looping wires. "Once it was cabled up, those who were adventurous could slide down. It would be great fun to start the day off. Put Starbucks out of business."

Just as I was about to suggest that Mailer fly to Billund and be elected honorary Master Builder—who better to relish the Ibsenite power of such a post?—he admitted that he didn't even like the stuff. "Lego's not perfect for it, because you have all those little, what can you call them, nipples, on top of each block, and they tend to spoil the line. I never enjoyed working with the plastic as such."

Mailer's metropolis, whether he likes it or not, would make a magnificent launchpad for Exploration Mars, one of three sets that supplement the new Lego Mindstorms Robotics Invention System, which will arrive on the market this fall. The heart of this system is a special Lego brick containing a microcomputer that you program from your P.C. and then incorporate into your Lego creation. I recently had a brief encounter with a Mindstorms car that came toward me, touched my finger with its front bumper, freaked out, turned around, and scooted off at ninety degrees. This struck me as authentic behavior.

Mindstorms is all part of the grand plan, as it was expounded in a 1997 Lego mission statement. Amid the usual nonsense about synergy and mind-sets, you hit this: "We want the LEGO brand to be the most powerful brand in the world among families with children. Our aim is to attain this objective no later than the year 2005." Bricks are clearly only a part of the deal. The new Lego kid will wear a Lego backpack to school, and shelter from the rain with a Lego umbrella and a pair of Lego rubber boots called Mudhoppers. When he gets home, he will lock himself in his room with the interactive building guide for his Lego Technic CyberMaster to make Stinger and Crusher. His only prayer will be that Mom and Dad won't try to come and help.

If there is a new dash of impatience, even of panic, in the soul of Lego, that is not the company's fault. The days when we could crouch down to play with Lego in the company of our kids—that wonderful sensation of joint solitude, both builders furrowing their brows over separate problems—were bound to be numbered. Childhood itself is reaching a pitch of knowledge and appetite that would flummox and exhaust your average Danish carpenter of 1932, and the temptation to move into Stingers and Crushers must be hard to resist.

THE future belongs to such projects as Legoland California, which will open in spring, 1999, in Carlsbad, near San Diego. The ideal to which it will aspire is not Billund but the British Legoland at Windsor, less than an hour west of London. I went there on March 14th, the opening day of the season, and spent five delirious hours shooting waterjets at the open mouths of Lego crocodiles and spinning around in Lego helicopters. Any place where an eight-year-old can earn his Lego driver's license by driving a Lego car around a road system is an intrinsically good thing, as is any lunch that consists of elephant-shaped chicken nuggets, an apple, a Coke, and a free Lego racing car. This last detail, I thought, could easily be incorporated into more fashionable dining contexts: "Yes, I'll have the squash risotto, the guinea fowl with grilled endive, half a bottle of Calon-Ségur, and Big Chief Rattle Snake's Camp."

There was a line to get into the Legoland Mindstorms Center, so I sneaked next door and found myself standing beside a rubberized track that was four yards long with a gentle slope. At the top was a starting grid, with room for five vehicles. At the bottom was a mass of Lego bits. This was my chance. I scooped up an armful of bricks and retired to a corner. Five minutes later, I was back, sizing up the competition. The kid on my left had come up with a hybrid of dragster and dragonfly. The kid on my right, newly versed in the law that momentum equals mass times velocity, was cradling what appeared to be a long wheel-based version of the World Trade Center. As for the quiet, self-possessed girl at the far end, I didn't trust her an inch. I had met her type before. And what about the red-haired kid with a car the size of a vole? We jostled for position, placed our speed machines, and waited for the ramp to drop. It was over in seconds. The girl romped home. The vole failed to start. The World Trade Center fell over. I came in third. Lego is the greatest toy in the world. ◆

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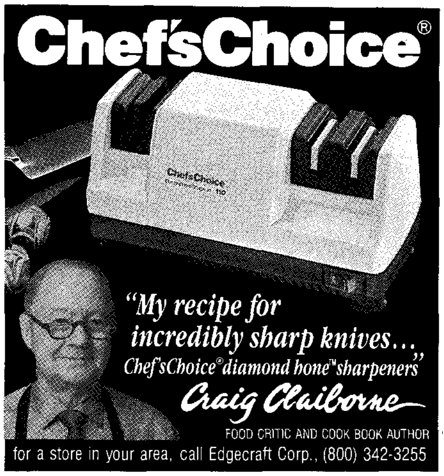

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THE PUBLISHING WORLD

SPRINGTIME FOR BERTELSMANN

The world's biggest book empire just got a lot bigger. But can publishing really be globalized?

BY DANIEL JOHNSON

The history of publishing began in Germany; perhaps it will end there. From Gutenberg and the humanists to Luther and the Reformation, a vast market for the printed word was created in a few decades. Later, too, the Germans continued to play a central role. It was Goethe who successfully pressed the Austrians and Prussians to enforce copyright, in order to protect the magnificent "authorized edition" that his publisher, Cotta, prepared for him from being pirated. In the nineteenth century, Germany was probably the first country to achieve virtually a hundred per cent literacy. And the prototypes of the modern media conglomerates emerged in imperial and Weimar Germany, from the liberal, Jewish firms of Ullstein and Mosse to the right-wing nationalist Hugenberg Concern. And then, almost overnight, the glorious tradition of German publishing, in which Jews played such a large part, was destroyed by the Nazis.

The cultural catastrophe that the Germans brought upon themselves became a boon for Americans, who rescued much of what remained of German culture after 1933. Samuel Fischer, the grand old man of German publishing, had taken a chance on "Buddenbrooks" and turned Thomas Mann into a figure of international renown; but when poor Fischer's firm was Nazified by the Third Reich, Mann sought refuge in New York. There he was entertained lavishly by Alfred Knopf, who allowed Mann, like many other less celebrated émigrés, to carry on his work.

Today, though, it may be that the national roles are being reversed. Bertelsmann's agreement last month to acquire Random House from Advance Publications (which owns this magazine) means that the destiny of publishing in English may now lie in German hands. The deal will consolidate the position of Bertelsmann—with its printers, distributors, book clubs, and Internet sales networks, not to mention a vast music and entertainment business that already includes such household names as RCA—as one of the world's big three media conglomerates (along with Disney and Time Warner) and by far the most important book publisher in the world. It intends to integrate its United States flagship, Bantam Doubleday Dell, into Random House, to create a publishing concern that will control a substantial portion of the American adult-trade-book market. In Britain, Random House UK enjoys a similarly prominent position and will now join forces with Bertelsmann's highly successful publisher Transworld UK.

Since the Bertelsmann deal has cultural as well as commercial implications, a degree of wounded Anglophone pride is understandable. Yet to read some of the comments on the Random House takeover from otherwise intelligent bookmen might lead one to suppose that it was indeed, as Michael Korda, of Simon & Schuster, said of German publishers last year, "their revenge for the Second World War." In London, Robert McCrum, who was formerly the editor-in-chief at T. S. Eliot's old house of Faber & Faber and is now literary editor of the *Observer*, invoked the idiom of the Third Reich to vent his disgust at Bertelsmann: it was a "blitzkrieg," and a "putsch," and the new proprietors were "German marauders," even "Visigoths."

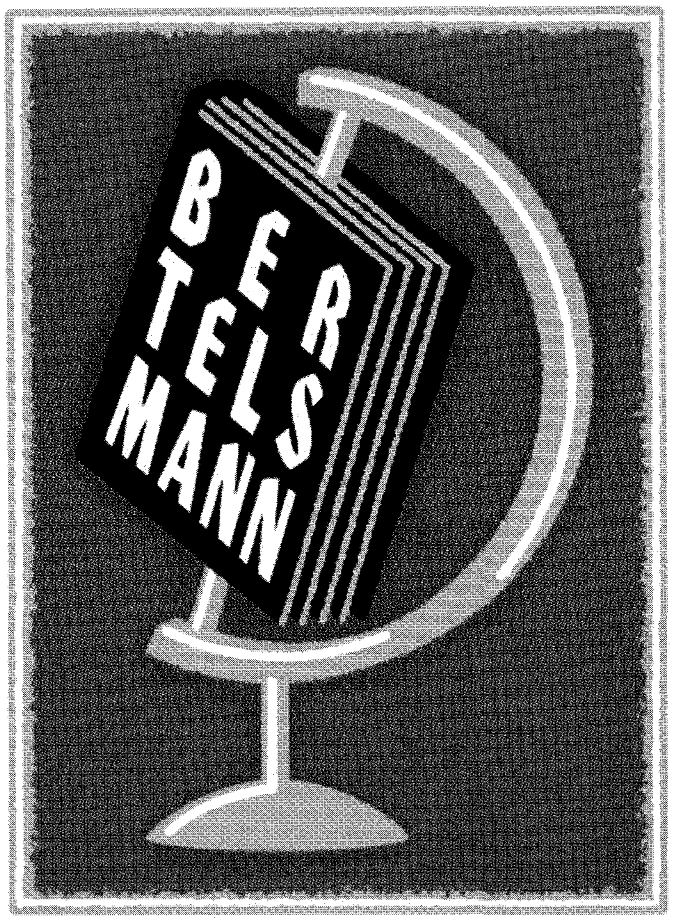
But such floridly anti-German rhetoric distracts one from a harder question: Can Bertelsmann do it? After all, Bertelsmann is rapidly expanding its publishing holdings at a time when many Anglophone media companies—among them Murdoch's News Corporation and Sumner Redstone's Viacom Corporation—have been seeking to shed their publishing houses. Does Bertelsmann know something they don't?

GÜTERSLOH, the small town in Germany where Bertelsmann has been based since the firm was founded, as a publisher of hymnals, in 1835, is not far from the Teutoburg Forest, where the Roman legions were slaughtered by Arminius and German history began. Near the local airport, at Paderborn, I glimpsed the old castle of Wewelsburg, which Himmler and the S.S. turned into the center of their pagan Aryan cult: part of it is now a youth hostel. Gütersloh itself has a population of ninety-four thousand; besides Bertelsmann, the only big employer is Miele, well known for its dishwashers. A fine church spire and a few old timbered Hansel and Gretel houses catch the eye, but Allied bombers and postwar planners erased whatever character the town center may once have had.

Bertelsmann's headquarters are sited by an artificial lake and look more like a campus than like a corporate office. The architecture is solid, in an unremarkable seventies idiom, and far from imposing; only a few hundred of Bertelsmann's sixty thousand employees work here. A newer building—light and airy, in the best Bauhaus tradition—houses the Bertelsmann Foundation, which disburses a sizable proportion of the firm's billion-Deutsche-mark annual profit on charitable projects, and clearly expresses its corporate cosmopolitanism. Among its projects is a series of events called the German-Jewish Dialogue. I had coffee in the foundation library with one of its executives, Dr. Roland Kaehlbrandt, who proudly asked me if this room wasn't like an English gentlemen's club. It wasn't.

Not far from the Gütersloh offices are the printing works, Mohndruck, and the Sonopress factory, a showpiece of German engineering, which puts out a million CDs a day. Germany has the highest labor costs in Europe, but Bertelsmann has been able to persuade its industrial workers to forgo a raise in order to enable them to compete with Eastern Europe and safeguard their company's profitability. Profitability is, of course, a Bertelsmann mantra, but Bertelsmann differs from other media companies in refusing to treat publishing as an endeavor that is inherently less profitable than any other. So far, it hasn't had to.

How has Bertelsmann grown steadily more prosperous over the past decade, even as other German firms have struggled? For an answer, I turned to "Success Through Partnership," the book by the man who rebuilt Bertelsmann after the Second World War and whose ideas are still its leitmotiv—Reinhard Mohn. The young Mohn fought in Rommel's Afrika Korps and was taken prisoner at Tunis. His decisive experience was his two-and-a-half-year captivity in America: an education in democracy and in commerce. When he returned to Gütersloh, in January of 1946—an evocative photograph shows him, still dressed in his Wehrmacht overcoat, addressing the shabby and malnourished staff—he put his acquaintance with American book clubs to good use, introducing the concept to the German market. In the lean postwar years, cheap book-club editions enabled the German bourgeois to start rebuilding their libraries. Today, Bertelsmann's book clubs have almost twenty-five million members worldwide.



"When we are in America," says Thomas Middelhoff, Bertelsmann's incoming chief executive, "we are Americans."

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Even before Bertelsmann became a multimedia conglomerate, though, Mohn had promulgated his philosophy in Bertelsmann's "corporate constitution." This laid down broad principles for the conduct of management and labor—including profit-sharing and decentralization of responsibility—with the aim of turning each executive into an entrepreneur rather than a bureaucrat. The company, according to its constitution, was to be "liberal and progressive" and to seek not only profits but solutions to the problems of modern society. It all sounds like capitalism with a human face; it also accords with much contemporary wisdom about running an effective organization. The firm—like the foundation—avoids political entanglements, though in the consensual coalition politics of postwar Germany it has leaned slightly to the left. It has also earned a reputation for being among the best-run multinationals in Europe.

Dr. Thomas Middelhoff, Bertelsmann's chairman-designate, is the man who engineered the Random House deal with S. I. Newhouse, Jr. Tall, with rather sensual good looks and a ready laugh, he seems to enjoy the view from his huge office window of the lake below. He grew up in the area and is perhaps all the fonder of it because he spends very little time here—no more than two days a week. Indeed, having just spent eight months in the United States, he said he felt "like an American with a German passport—when we are in America we are Americans." But he has emphatically rejected the idea of moving the head office to Berlin, as so many other German multinationals are doing. "That would send out a strong signal that we are a German company," he says. Not surprisingly, he seems to prefer the term "European" to "German."

Middelhoff, who is forty-four, has that blend of easygoing informality and moral intensity which is characteristic of his generation. This means that one is on first-name terms with him almost

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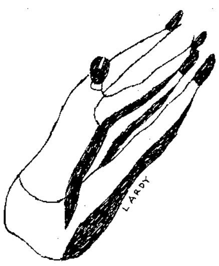
immediately, and he is not in the least reluctant to mention the war: he must have been saturated at school with discussions about "overcoming the past." He speaks proudly of the fact that Bertelsmann published the German edition of Daniel Goldhagen's controversial "Hitler's Willing Executioners," an unsparing—and, some critics have argued, unduly harsh—account of the role of ordinary Germans in the Holocaust. "Perhaps for the first time in Germany we have had a broad discussion in public about the Holocaust, about the different responsibilities, including my parents' generation," he says. "That was such a new experience that I thought, Great! Everybody who knows us believes that we will continue to do this in the future. And I believe this was a major, major reason for Si Newhouse to sell Random House to Bertelsmann."



Middelhoff, clearly, is very much a man of his times. As the Deutsche mark, the last great symbol of German power, is about to be absorbed into the euro, the thirty- and forty-somethings who will be running Germany for the next couple of decades have no nostalgia for past political glories, let alone military ones. But, unlike so many members of Reinhard Mohn's generation, they don't want to forget the past so much as to come to terms with it—to reclaim the legacy of German culture before the Nazis.

Capitalism with a human face remains capitalism. Middelhoff says that Peter Olson, who is in charge of Bertelsmann's English-language publishing, will enjoy complete operational independence—provided he can eventually attain the firm's profit target of a fifteen-per-cent return on total assets employed, something Olson accomplished seven years after taking over Doubleday, in 1986. Middelhoff expects Olson, in turn, to give his publishers the same freedom to follow their hunches: "No question that Sonny Mehta"—the editor-in-chief of Knopf—"will work as an absolutely independent entrepreneur publisher, allowed to take risks. I like that!"

At the same time, Middelhoff stresses that Bertelsmann will not take risks in areas it does not know well. "If you ask 'Will Thomas Middelhoff ever buy a Hollywood major?' my answer is 'No, never.' We have no management, no experience, no culture for Hollywood. There is no synergy between Hollywood and a book publisher, but between a book publisher and a book club, a book warehouse, and a book-printing plant you will figure out a lot of synergies."

I tell Middelhoff that Bertelsmann's corporate ethos seems to derive from the specifically West German conditions of the postwar "economic miracle"—the credo of social solidarity, strictly regulated markets, and worker participation which was central to that country's vaunted social market economy. Middelhoff, perhaps chary of emphasizing the Germanness of his firm, vigorously disputes this. He argues that the firm's real inspiration—Mohn's great vision—came from America and points out that the company has increasingly recruited much of its young talent from leading American universities. What's more, Middelhoff notes, English is becoming the firm's own lingua franca.

As evidence, he hands me a copy of the latest draft of the "Bertelsmann Essentials," a boiled-down and updated version of Mohn's 1960 constitution. It is still being circulated among the senior management, and all the discussions and drafts, Middelhoff claims, are conducted in English. Only when it is finished will this document be translated into German. It states, "Executives shall act as entrepreneurs who exercise leadership and pursue excellence of their company. . . . Each unit develops its own editorial or artistic profile. At the same time, we respect the traditions and cultural values of each society in which we operate."

Later, I notice an old gentleman with a soldierly bearing passing us on the stairs, bound for the office canteen. "Is that Reinhard Mohn?" I ask. The P.R. people nod—every day, he eats with the staff at 1 P.M., as punctual as the Count of Monte Cristo—but they are evidently too much in awe of him to introduce me.

GERMAN publishing can seem provincial to an American: there are very few agents, there is no equivalent of Barnes & Noble, and there are as yet no German authors with the international appeal of a John Updike, let alone a John Grisham. Nor does Germany yet have any one publishing capital; there are major German publishers in such cities as Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Stuttgart. To speak with Frank Wössner, the head of Bertelsmann's publishing division, I travelled to Munich. Frank Wössner himself makes no pretense of being as cosmopolitan as those who run the New York branch, though he makes it very clear that Peter Olson reports to him. The younger brother of the company chairman, Mark Wössner, Frank Wössner is fifty-nine and admits that he is more comfortable speaking German. He has been at the helm of Bertelsmann's expansion into the parlous regions of upmarket publishing, yet he is also a clear link with Bertelsmann's postwar past. Courteous but formal and unsmiling, he represents the old-style German manager; he used to be in the insurance business.

"Fifty years ago, we were basically a book club," he said. "Now we have literary imprints." The firm has indeed come a long way over those decades. When luminaries of German fiction such as Günter Grass and Heinrich Böll started publishing, in the decades after the war, Bertelsmann was effectively in the mail-order business, purveying cheap reprints by the post; and even as it began to publish a greater number of original titles, its profile was essentially mass market—more VW than BMW. The company spent the next couple of decades expanding into television and the record business; in the early seventies, it moved into magazines, with the newsweekly *Stern* among its holdings. (Bertelsmann has also established a major presence in new media—the division, significantly, that Middelhoff comes from. In partnership with America Online, it has even become Europe's biggest on-line service provider.)

Over the past decade, however, Bertelsmann hasn't been merely growing laterally; as Frank Wössner boasted, it has been climbing culturally. Among the prestigious imprints Wössner refers to are Knaus, Siedler, and Blessing. Wössner also speaks proudly of Goldmann, a once sleepy imprint that under Bertelsmann's ownership has become the market leader. He is even prouder of a new paperback imprint, BTB, which is already very successful, despite its highbrow list.

A rival publisher says, "Bertelsmann is not what it was ten years ago—a place without a face. Now it's dangerous. It has become a very aggressive company, spending too much money in what seems to be an effort to squeeze out the competition and increase its market share." Other rivals complain that Bertelsmann imprints coördinate bids for rights among themselves, rather than competing against each other for manuscripts and risk bidding up the price. Frank Wössner demurs, saying, "We encourage sportsmanlike competition between our publishers." In fact, such competition takes place only internally: once the imprints have decided among themselves which one will make an offer for a particular book, Bertelsmann presents a united front.

Nor does the company's move into more "literary" publishing reflect the promotion of culture over commerce. Germany, after all, has a literate rather than a post-literate public. The country publishes many more titles a year than the United States does, and though Germans read many of the same best-sellers that Americans read, they retain a deep respect for serious writers.

It's not obvious, therefore, that literary cachet will prove to be as commercially viable for Bertelsmann's English-speaking operations. One German competitor has described Bantam Doubleday Dell as a "ruined label," with "trashy lists"; others fear that Bertelsmann might reduce the diversity of titles and imprints at Random House. Peter Olson, of course, strenuously denies this. "We didn't buy Random House in order to close down imprints," he told me, and he pointed to two new imprints—Broadway and Anchor—recently launched in the United States and in Britain by Bantam Doubleday Dell and Transworld, respectively. The merging of the two American houses, he says, would be "neither a Bantamization of Random House nor a Randomization of BDD," and the policy of decentralizing decisions would be kept "religiously."

IN Munich, I heard a similar defense of the company's commitment to serious publishing from two of Bertelsmann's more literarily ambitious publishers. Karl Blessing, who is a well-

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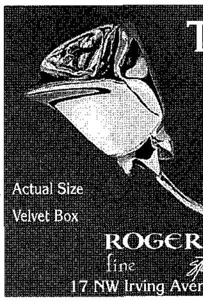

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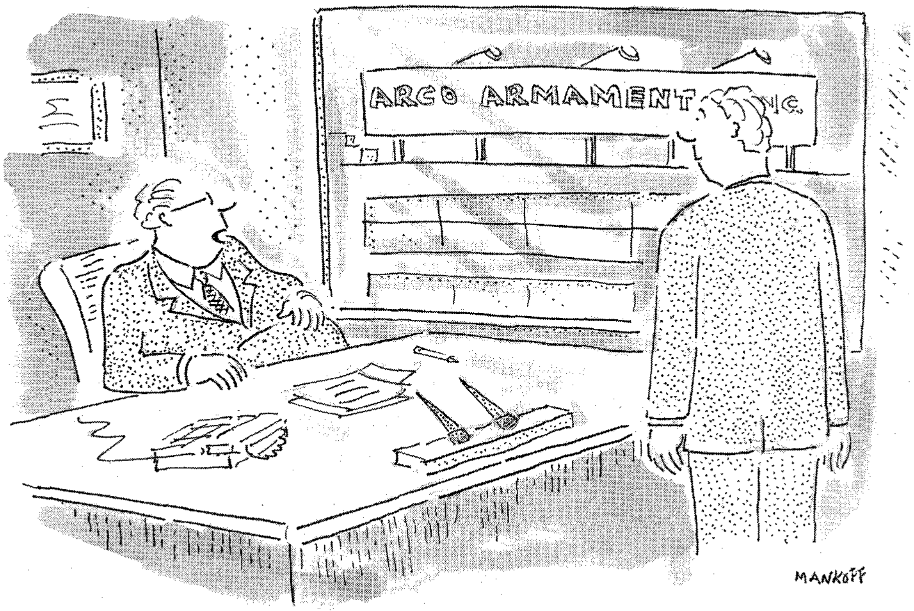

"When you get down to it, Dave, we're all about people: people helping people to kill people."

known and respected figure on the London and New York publishing scenes, told me he much prefers Bertelsmann's attitude to that of the German media conglomerate Holtzbrinck, for whom he worked as editorial director of Droemer books until two years ago. There, he said, the "figures guys" run everything, while Herr von Holtzbrinck himself "hardly reads books at all." At Bertelsmann, he maintained, creative publishers have fewer worries about their finance controllers. "Sonny [Mehta] is our idol, the jewel in the crown," he exclaimed. "What could happen to him? It will be an honor if he stays." (Sonny Mehta, for his part, told me that he has found comfort in the fact that Karl Blessing seemed to fit in so well at Bertelsmann.)

When I visited Klaus Eck, who is one of Bertelsmann's most senior publishers, at the Munich headquarters, he declared that Bertelsmann knew better than to take a "conglomerate approach" to upmarket publishing. His own office was a proper publisher's den, with book-lined walls and an atelier-style skylight. It could not have been more different from Thomas Middelhoff's, but then Eck's argument was that Bertelsmann has room for both bohemians and technocrats. "Authors are sensitive people," he told me, "and they prefer an old-fashioned approach. Otherwise, they think that smaller houses are the only ones who treat them the way they want to be treated." He is aware, too, that "you can destroy a list by adding one name that shouldn't be there." Eck is notably Anglo-American in manner, and says he insists on "open doors and open minds." He apologized for having such a tidy desk, and one felt that he was really apologizing for being German.

We talked about the prospect of Schocken's definitive Kafka edition joining the Bertelsmann stable, and Eck said he wanted to re-create the richness of prewar German publishing: "The time after 1933 destroyed that culture, and it may take another fifty years to rebuild it." In truth, that golden age may never come again, yet the postwar locust years have certainly ended, at least at Bertelsmann. As I left, I took with me a few of the new BTB paperbacks, including the deft, melancholy "Weltschmerz," by Walter Kempowski, which is the story of a childhood in the Third Reich: a childhood shattered into prose fragments, each one an everyday memory, each one overshadowed by the threatening adult world—an accomplished book in the tradition of Günter Grass's "The Tin Drum."

For all the book's air of menace, it was, of course, oddly reassuring about the cultural aspirations of the new Bertelsmann A.G. If Bertelsmann has quietly become the Big Brother of the book, everything depends on how it will use its dominant market position. Despite the expressed fears of some of its English and American critics, Bertelsmann isn't the propaganda arm of an economic nationalism, aggressively promoting German interests in the Anglophone world; its corporate mission is, if anything, the antithesis of such revanchist nationalism. Which isn't to say that Bertelsmann is precisely the deracinated, free-floating behemoth of Marxist caricature, cloning itself endlessly to no cultural purpose. It's true that Bertelsmann recruits a cosmopolitan élite of managerial *Übermenschen;* it's also true that its history is the very embodiment of Max Weber's Protestant work ethic, steeped in the spirit of North German pietism—even though the new chief, Middelhoff, is a Catholic. But all these characteristics serve an imperium not of German culture but of global capital. That isn't cosmopolitanism in its classical conception, but perhaps it will do.

IN 1843, Heinrich Heine, the great German-Jewish poet of late Romanticism, travelled home to Hamburg from his self-imposed Parisian exile to see, among others, his publisher, Julius Campe. (Like many writers, Heine had a love-hate affair with his publisher: he could write Campe fulsome letters but to his sister he confided on this visit that "my bookseller is the greatest knave in the world.") The verse narrative of his journey—the wittily disrespectful and bitterly disillusioned "Germany: A Winter's Tale"—ends with a grim vision: he glimpses Germany's future and cannot bear to describe it. In an afterthought, though, Heine also holds out some hope: the old hypocrites are dying of their dishonesty, and the new generation is emerging "unadorned and innocent, free to think and free to enjoy."

It may be no accident that Heine's bicentenary was celebrated with such enthusiasm in Germany last year: Heine, the émigré who wrote that he carried his patriotism on the soles of his shoes, strikes the right note for the Germans at the end of the twentieth century. Campe worried that Heine was out of step with the rise of German nationalism, that his books were too Francophile to sell. Today, his publishers would say just the opposite. And quite possibly they would be under the wing of Bertelsmann. ♦

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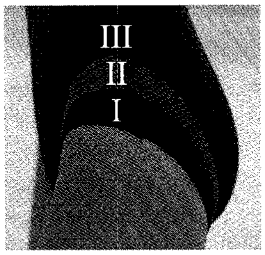

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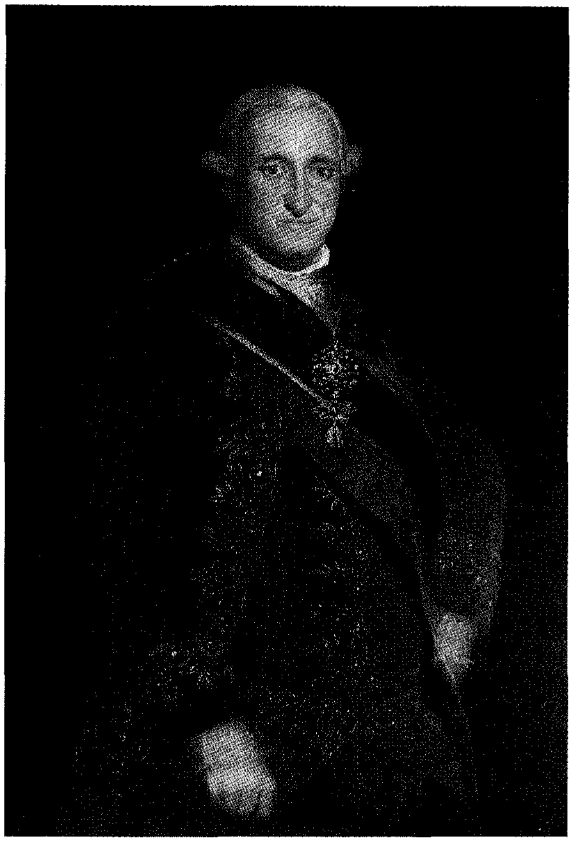
ROYAL AFFAIRS

THE REIGN IN SPAIN

Has Juan Carlos de Borbón y Borbón made the monarchy essential to Spanish democracy?

BY JON LEE ANDERSON



King Juan Carlos (opposite) and his royal ancestor Carlos IV painted by Goya (above) share the Bourbon nose but little else: in 1808, Carlos surrendered Spain to Napoleon, while in this century Juan Carlos saved his country from a military coup.

MUSEO LAZARO GALDIANO, MADRID/BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY; OPPOSITE, JULIAN PARKER/GAMMA LIAISON

THE baron showed me his ancient dungeon, where a ball and chain and iron manacles are still anchored firmly in the stone wall, and then we stepped out onto one of the balconies that jut from his castle. Below was a spreading fan of carefully tended fields that belong to his family, and tiny, rock-walled plots that belong to his family's former vassals. The baron explained that for the past hundred and seventy years—ever since the abolition of *señoríos*, or feudal landholdings—the descendants of the vassals have been property owners. Yet they adhere to the tradition of primogeniture, just as he does. Each generation passes on its inheritance to the eldest son, to avoid breaking up the land. "You see?" he said smiling. "Some old traditions, the most practical ones, survive today. They are still very useful."

We went inside for drinks, and sat in armchairs in front of a log fire, in an elegant room decorated with silver-framed photographs of the baron's past and present friends—the exiled Italian King Victor Emmanuel, King Zog of Albania, Monaco's Grimaldis, Generalísimo Francisco Franco. The baron told me about his family, who received their title hundreds of years ago. In the nineteenth century, they were Carlists, fierce opponents of Queen Isabel II, whose right to rule was disputed by her uncle, Don Carlos. The Carlist cause led to three bloody civil wars in the eighteen-hundreds and survived as a rallying ground well into the twentieth century.

That was old history now, the baron said; his family had made their peace with the present King, Juan Carlos I, the great-great-grandson of Isabel II. "It is thanks to Juan Carlos that we have a monarchy at all," he remarked. "And he deserves great credit for insuring that the transition to democracy was carried out without bloodshed—in this country where we like blood so much!"

A few days later, I was in Barcelona, talking to a former high-ranking Socialist government official in his office in a black-tinted glass tower. "This may sound ridiculous, but I am passionately loyal to the Crown," he said. "And I have a great love and respect for the King. Even if I knew something about him which I could criticize, I would never do so."

The Socialist technocrat in his office filled with modern art was in complete agreement with the old baron: Juan Carlos de Borbón y Borbón is a good thing. In 1975, when Franco died and the King assumed the throne, Spain was a backward and isolated nation that had been ruled for nearly forty years by a regime that exercised rigid censorship laws, outlawed birth control and political parties, and garrotted political prisoners to death. Today, it is a socially tolerant, prosperous nation with a fully functioning democracy. "Just imagine," says Salvador Giner, a Catalonian Basque academic who is the dean of the Sociology Department of Barcelona University. "For forty years, we had Franco, a little Fascist dictator with a tasselled hat who didn't speak any foreign languages or travel anywhere. And then along came Juan Carlos. He's tall, good-looking, speaks several languages, and has a great pedigree, too—better than the Queen of England, who is descended from some second-rate German princelings." To illustrate the point, Giner grabs his nose: "He's got the big Bourbon nose and"—pulling down his lower lip to make it protrude—"the Hapsburg lips."

IN a series of rooms in the Prado Museum, in Madrid, there are many portraits by Goya depicting Juan Carlos's royal ancestor Carlos IV, a Bourbon who earned everlasting ignominy for surrendering Spain to Napoleon in 1808. In one of them, the stout and pasty-faced King looks stiff and uncomfortable in a crimson frock coat and

a powdered wig. His silk sashes and medals denote his exalted office. The effect is quite remote from that projected by Juan Carlos, who is lean and suntanned, and who sails his own boat and has a collection of motorcycles. But the facial resemblance is remarkable. There is, indeed, a "Bourbon look"—a high, sloping brow, a sweeping, fleshy nose, and a protuberant chin.

I was thinking about the Goya as I trailed Juan Carlos around during a reception in Madrid early last month. The occasion was the hundredth anniversary of the Madrid Medical Association. There had been a ceremony at which the King gave a short speech and was presented with a gold medal, and now he and his wife, Queen Sofía, were moving through the crowd, along with waiters carrying drinks and hors d'oeuvres on trays. The King and Queen took separate routes, smiling and chatting. Juan Carlos has the supple body of an athlete, but I noticed that his hair is thinning and that he has acquired the slightly drooping jowls and cheeks of a man who is aging. He's now sixty.

When we were introduced, the King was disarmingly attentive. After some polite chitchat, he asked where I had learned Spanish. I told him, "In Latin America, mostly, Your Majesty, and, most recently, Cuba, which is a very interesting place. I understand that you haven't been there."

The possibility of the King's going to Cuba was a fraught subject in Madrid just then, and widely speculated on in the Spanish press. This year is the centennial of the Spanish-American War, in which Spain lost nearly all of what remained of her empire. If the King were to visit Cuba, officials of the Royal Household say, he would make the event a symbolic reconciliation between the two countries, just as he did with a trip in February to the Philippines, another colony lost in the war of 1898.

Spain has had a reasonably good relationship with Cuba since the early eighties, when the Socialist Party came to power, but in 1996 the Socialists lost an election to the more conservative Partido Popular, and the new prime minister, José María Aznar, got into a war of wills with Castro, who had rejected Aznar's ambassador in Havana. Aznar then refused to nominate anyone else. In early March, Castro publicly invited the King to visit him, and Aznar took this as an insult. He apparently thought Castro was attempting an end run around him.

Juan Carlos didn't respond to my remark about Cuba at first, and he turned his head away, as if to move off, but then he turned back and leaned toward me and said, confidingly, "You know, I've just sent a letter to Castro through his ambassador here. I've asked him to stop *tirándome flores*"—literally, "throwing flowers at me," a slangy expression—"flattering me, inviting me so directly to come. It creates problems. He knows that to invite me he has to go through the government here, and, first, the government has to name an ambassador. Even Felipe"—Spain's former Socialist prime minister, Felipe González—"who is not exactly *with* this government, agrees. When I saw him the other day, he said, 'Castro knows better—he shouldn't be doing that!'"

Startled as much by the King's slang as by his apparent candor, I replied that I hoped His Majesty would, after all, be able to go to Cuba. Did he think he would?

"Oh, yes," the King replied. "As soon as the government names an ambassador, *it will be fine*." These last words were spoken in clearly enunciated English.

Later, stressing that the King "should not make political declarations," one of his aides fretfully sought assurances that our chat had been off the record. She argued that if he was quoted it would "create a diplomatic incident between Spain and Cuba." The problem didn't seem to be Cuba so much as Prime Minister Aznar, however. "There are a lot of people who wish to go to Cuba," he said curtly during a radio interview the day after the reception. The King would be able to go to Cuba when it was "his turn."

Aznar's snit and Castro's sly gesture are illuminating for what they say about the fragile nature of the relationship between even a very popular King and a democratically elected government. Although Juan Carlos is formally limited by Spain's constitution to largely symbolic public functions—ratifying laws, calling elections, accrediting ambassadors, and so forth—and despite disclaimers by members of his staff that he is "above politics," he does wield real, if difficult to quantify, political clout. The constitution identifies him as "the head of state, the symbol of its unity and permanence," and says that he will "arbitrate and moderate" its activities. This description is open to some interpretation, and the King has developed a style that seems to work quite effectively. For example, he holds daily private *audiencias* with politicians, businessmen, journalists, academics, and military officers at his residence in the Palacio de la Zarzuela, a few miles outside Madrid. The *audiencias* provide him with an occasion to dispense discreet advice and get his opinions across. John Brademas, a former congressman from Indiana who is now with the King Juan Carlos I of Spain Center at New York University, tells of having lunch with the King, and of how, when he mentioned a certain businessman's name, Juan Carlos "wrinkled his nose." It was all he had to do. "This is a king who lets one know how he feels," Brademas says.

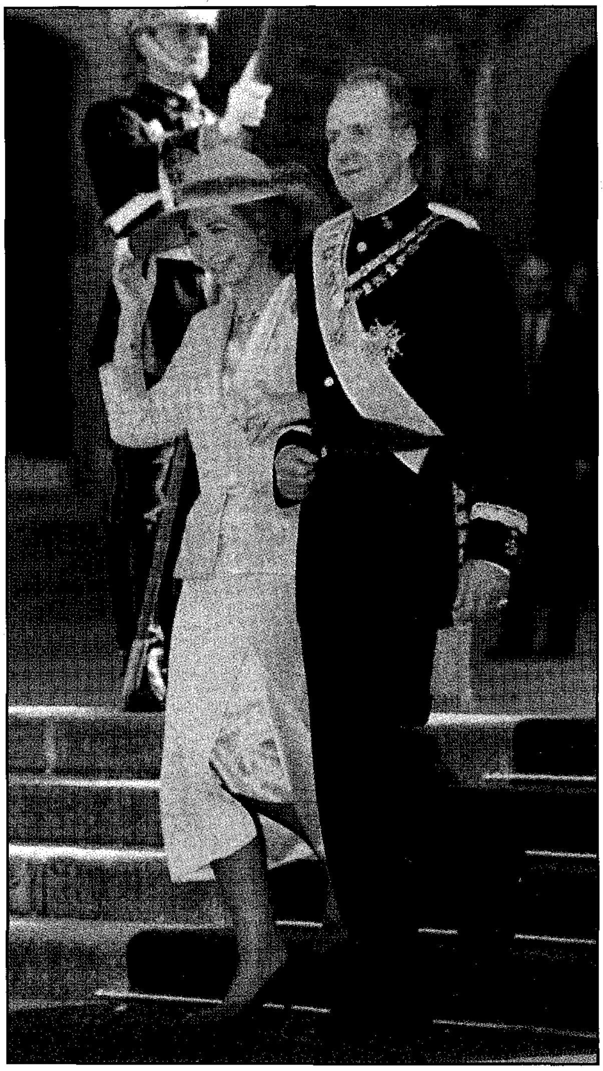
LA ZARZUELA is reached via a busy highway that heads north out of the city, past the Presidential Palace. An exit just beyond a confusing new spaghetti junction of roads and overpasses leads to a gatehouse and a road that winds through a low forest of holm oaks and scrub pines, past herds of grazing deer and the occasional spotted *jabalí*, a kind of wild boar. The low-slung red brick and stone royal mansion dominates the edge of a flat ridge. Below it, tucked discreetly into the ridge, is a staff annex, which is joined to the palace by a long underground corridor lined with glass cabinets in which are displayed exquisitely crafted model boats from the King's private collection.

The head of media relations for the Royal Household, Asunción Valdés, has an office in the annex. Valdés speaks in chirrupy, upbeat tones and smiles a lot. Most of the administrative staff affect this style. It is as if they had adopted, collectively, the King's famously simpatico public persona as their own. "The King treats the palace gardener with the same naturalness as he does a head of state," Valdés explained brightly. "He has the gift of being able to win people over. The King gives you confidence and makes people feel comfortable around him." Valdés has had her job since 1993, when there was a big turnover of staff at the palace, after the King gave an unfortunate spate of interviews that played badly with the Spanish public. One foreign diplomat describes her job as keeping a "Verdun Line" around Juan Carlos.

"La Zarzuela can hardly be called a palace," she says. "It's really just a *big house.* The King lives here very simply. He could have chosen to live in any one of the other royal palaces, which are much larger and more luxurious, but no. Their Majesties said they wanted to live in a place with human dimensions." On the lawn outside one of the formal rooms in La Zarzuela is a brown stone sculpture by the Basque sculptor Eduardo Chillida, which, as Valdés points out, resembles a throne. She reminds me that Juan Carlos is a king who has "never worn his crown, or sat on a throne." The sculpture, she says, is the closest thing to a throne he owns—"a symbolic throne."

Juan Carlos's motto is "The Crown must be earned every day," and his friends and employees are inclined to repeat the phrase with cuckoo-clock regularity. "The approval polls may be favorable, but we have to keep working," Valdés says, opening a large binder embossed with the royal seal. She examines a section labelled "Places Visited," which lists which cities every member of the Royal Family has gone to, and whether the visit was for social, educational, economic, cultural, or military purposes. "Here we see, for instance, that this city has not been visited very much, so we have to plan a visit soon!" she exclaims.

Juan Carlos seems to be particularly gifted at image control. "This King is no idiot," remarks Baltasar Porcel, the head of the Catalan Institute for Mediterranean Studies, who meets the King periodically at the *audiencias.* "His simplicity is very real, but it is very calculated at the same time." In keeping with his policy of creating a "modern monarchy," Juan Carlos has not isolated himself or established a royal court. This has caused resentment among some of Spain's old noble families, who were traditionally given sinecures and special access to the King. "The fact that he hasn't handed out traditional posts, like Keeper of the King's Food or Keeper of His Majesty's Hairbrush, has meant that the grandees really hate him," Joan Fontfreda Puig, a Catalan nobleman, says. "This King is more popular with the people than with the aristocracy."



The Royal couple: The King is the best thing Spain could have invented for its politics, a prominent Socialist says.

BOERTE/NUNN SYNDICATION LTD.

JUAN CARLOS was not always popular or thought to be politically savvy. Indeed, at the time of his coronation, he was mocked as a dim-witted military puppet, and it was assumed that he wouldn't last long. Jokes circulated about Juan Carlos, el Breve (the Brief).

Juan Carlos's paternal grandfather, King Alfonso XIII, fled Spain ignominiously in 1931, when the Republicans took over the government. Alfonso was stripped of his citizenship, and his property was seized. In exile, first in Paris and then in Rome, he lived the life of a playboy, womanizing, gambling, and big-game hunting. His British-born wife, Queen Victoria Eugenia, who was the granddaughter of Queen Victoria, soon left him.

The Republic fell in 1939, and Franco installed himself as Spain's caudillo, or strongman. He did not want to share power with the Bourbons, and they remained in exile. Juan Carlos, who was born in Rome in 1938, moved with his parents first to Switzerland and then to Portugal. In 1941, shortly before his death, Alfonso XIII abdicated in favor of his son, Juan Carlos's father, Don Juan.

Juan Carlos went to Spain for the first time in 1948, when he was ten. This was the result of an agreement made between Franco and his father during a meeting on Franco's yacht, which was anchored off the coast of northern Spain. Franco proposed that Don Juan allow Juan Carlos to complete his education in Spain. He evidently felt that this would defuse a budding alliance between royalists and exiled socialists, and neutralize Don Juan, who would see Franco's invitation as opening the way to a Bourbon restoration. Don Juan accepted.

Juan Carlos spent his youth studying at special schools or cloistered in palaces where he was tutored privately and looked after by guardians, men who reported back either to Don Juan or to Franco, depending on their loyalties. He was a lacklustre student, but he was good at sports, and an affable, if somewhat deferred-to, classmate. Periodically, he would be summoned to the Palacio del Pardo, where Franco treated him in a grandfatherly way. At their first meeting, he gave the boy a shotgun; not surprisingly, Juan Carlos's earliest memories of el Caudillo are fond ones. On holidays, he visited his family in Portugal.

Don Juan and Franco met twice more to discuss the Prince's future. Both times, Franco's arguments won out. Instead of studying in Belgium, as his father wished, Juan Carlos was sent to Spanish military academies. His younger brother, Alfonso, was a cadet with him, and in 1956, when they were visiting their parents in Portugal, there was a terrible accident. The boys were playing with a gun and it went off. Alfonso was hit in the head and died immediately. Juan Carlos remained silent and withdrawn for months afterward, and has never spoken about the incident publicly.

JUAN CARLOS attended a university in Madrid for two years, and in 1962, when he was twenty-four, he married Princess Sofía of Greece. She was the German-Greek daughter of Paul I of Greece and Frederica of Hanover, and a good match for a future King of Spain. Like Juan Carlos, Sofía was a direct descendant of Queen Victoria, and also of Kaiser Wilhelm II. They settled into La Zarzuela, which had been a royal hunting lodge. It had been badly damaged during the Civil War but was restored and outfitted by Franco especially for their use. They soon produced three children: two girls, Elena and Cristina, in 1963 and 1965, respectively, and then, in 1968, a male heir, Felipe.

Juan Carlos had come to understand that Franco had no intention of allowing his father to take the throne. Franco dropped hints that he favored Juan Carlos as his eventual successor, but he also made sure that Juan Carlos was insecure about his future. As far back as 1952, Franco had recruited a potential alternative to Juan Carlos by inviting Alfonso de Borbón-Dampierre, his cousin, to study in Spain. Over the years, the rival cousins had each acquired a coterie of political allies who defended his cause, and friends recall that by the time Juan Carlos was in his mid-twenties he possessed a strong sense of his dynastic heritage. He wanted to become King.

In 1972, Alfonso married Franco's granddaughter, but Juan Carlos's position had been strengthened considerably three years earlier, when Franco summoned him to El Pardo and announced his intention to name him his successor, "with the title of King." Did he accept? As Juan Carlos has told the story ever since, Franco demanded his reply immediately, and he had no opportunity to discuss things with his father.

There is an alternative version of this story, which is the case with most crucial episodes in the King's life. "That's not how it happened!" the baron who had shown me around his castle said, laughing. "He'd been demanding that Franco declare him successor for years, and when Franco did, he had to come up with an excuse to explain why he couldn't tell his father before accepting."

Three weeks after Franco made his proposal, the Prince stood before the Cortes, the Spanish parliament, to swear fealty to him and his regime. It was months before Don Juan agreed to speak to his son again, and, according to several of Juan Carlos's closest friends, it was years before their relationship returned to normal. As Asunción Valdés describes it, "the relationship between the King and his father was something like a Shakespearean tragedy."

Don Juan did not formally withdraw his claim to the throne until 1977, more than a year after Franco died and his son was crowned. By then, Spain's new King had shown himself to be full of surprises. He fired the right-wing prime minister, Carlos Arias Navarro, and appointed a young, reformist politician named Adolfo Suárez in his place. Franco's Cortes was dissolved, and a national referendum was called to approve a law of political reform, which passed overwhelmingly. A long-standing ban on political parties was lifted, and in June, 1977, Juan Carlos called for general elections. Adolfo Suárez was confirmed in office, and in 1978, when a new constitution was approved, Spain formally became a constitutional monarchy with a democratic political system.

The new constitution left Juan Carlos without the sweeping powers he had inherited from Franco, but written into it was something that for him—born in exile as the son of an uncrowned king, and as the grandson of a king who had been forced to flee his country—may well have been more important: "The Crown of Spain shall be inherited by the successors of H.M. Juan Carlos I de Borbón, the legitimate heir of the historical dynasty."

THE legitimate heir is now Crown Prince Felipe, who turned thirty in January. He is tall, athletic, and poised, and he has a master's degree in international relations from Georgetown University, in Washington. Recently, he began making regular public appearances and assuming some of his father's traditional duties. It has become his job to attend the inaugural ceremonies of Latin-American heads of state. In March, he led a large Spanish trade delegation to Japan.

Prince Felipe is one of Europe's most eligible bachelors, and the pages of the *revistas del corazón*—gossip magazines—are full of speculation about the identity of his girlfriends and the candidates for his future bride. Most recently, he has been linked to Catherine von Hapsburg, the Archduchess of Austria, but until last year the stories were all about his presumed relationship with a young American woman, Gigi Howard, whom he met when he was at Georgetown. The liaison was reportedly ended on the orders of Queen Sofía, who is said to want him to marry a daughter of one of Europe's royal houses.

News coverage of the Royal Family is overwhelmingly positive in Spain, and doesn't normally intrude very far into their private lives. There is the occasional tabloid story about the King's alleged lovers, and, off the record, mainstream Spanish journalists and even politicians friendly to Juan Carlos credit stories of a long relationship with a woman in Majorca and of shorter ones with other women. But they routinely dismiss his sexual habits as unimportant. "The business between Monica Lewinsky and Clinton wouldn't get a second reading here. In Spain that kind of thing is considered a private matter," Xavier Batalla, a writer for the Barcelona newspaper *La Vanguardia*, explains. He concedes that there is a "pact of silence in the press not to write about the King's personal things. . . . The pact of silence isn't written down. Nobody has told me anything. Maybe I know something, but I don't write it. Nobody has to tell me what to do." Batalla defends his self-censorship by dismissing "the rumorology" about the King's private life as "motivated by a political intention to damage the solidity of the monarchy."

The loyalty and peculiar defensiveness the King inspires, even from a relatively free press, stems from the circumstances of modern Spanish history. The Civil War tore Spain apart only sixty years ago. It was a brutal episode even by the standards of twentieth-century brutality. As many as a million people died. After the Republic fell, Franco imposed a repressive police state in which political dissidents were tortured and beaten to death. By the early nineteen-seventies, when Juan Carlos was preparing to take the throne, there was mounting unrest and political violence. In December, 1973, the Basque separatist group ETA assassinated Franco's prime minister and Juan Carlos's closest ally, Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, in a car-bomb explosion.

Juan Carlos established himself as a bulwark against political chaos on the night of February 23, 1981, when gun-wielding Civil Guard officers stormed into the Cortes, and took the entire government hostage. The leader of the attempted coup implied that the King supported them, but hours later, when Juan Carlos appeared on television wearing his uniform as the Captain-General of Spain's armed forces, he called for the defense of democracy, and the attempt to overthrow the government collapsed. The King had effectively ended the era of military intervention in Spanish politics.

There are skeptics who question what went on during the seven hours between the time the Cortes was seized and the time Juan Carlos made his appearance. The official version says that he was on the phone marshalling his supporters. The skeptics say that he was on the fence. What no one calls into question is the King's extraordinary sense of what is going to work politically. As Asunción Valdés says, admiringly, "he knows where the wind blows from."

JUAN CARLOS'S power was enhanced around this time by a reorganization of Spain's political structure. To an extent that could not have been foreseen by anyone, his early support for the limited devolution of power from Madrid to the historically distinct regions—such as Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Galicia—increased his influence. Since 1982, Spain has been divided into seventeen so-called autonomous communities. "Because of the autonomous communities, the Spanish state is very weak, and this makes the role of the monarchy very important," Charles Powell, an Anglo-Spanish historian and Spanish parliamentary aide, explains. "The King is the only genuinely national figure in a country with an unusual deficit of national symbols. There are fewer national holidays in Spain than in other European countries, and the national anthem is rarely played."

Catalonia, with its capital city of Barcelona—a traditional rival to Madrid—is the showcase for the King's relationship to the autonomous communities. Xavier Roig, a Socialist who worked as a senior aide to Pasqual Maragall, the former mayor of Barcelona, recalls that he and his colleagues tried to involve Juan Carlos in their activities when they gained power in the early eighties. "Just imagine," he says. "We were all young then, and we came into office as leftists, but we quickly realized that to operate we had to go through the comic opera of ritualizing monarchical protocol. For example, in our internal memorandums we would write notes saying, 'I think it would be appropriate to invite H.M. the King to this activity.' The H.M. was a conscious effort, you see? We knew that we had to reinforce the role of the monarchy so as not to leave it to the right."

The head of Catalonia's autonomous government, Jordi Pujol, who seeks greater independence for Catalonia within an increasingly integrated Europe, has pursued a special relationship with the King. The idea is that Catalonia would owe fealty to the Crown as a unifying symbol, and the relationship with Spain would be more like a confederation. But, as Charles Powell points out, "if the autonomies demand a special link to the monarchy, this poses real problems for the central government."

Many Catalans believe that there was something called Operation Cristina that forged a direct link between Catalonia and the Royal Family. Princess Cristina, Juan Carlos's younger daughter, works in Barcelona for Fundación la Caixa, the philanthropic arm of a large bank. A Catalan close to the King denies the existence of Operation Cristina, but acknowledges that "the presence of Cristina in Barcelona is not accidental. It wasn't planned, but it's been seen to be useful."

Last October, Cristina married Iñaki Urdangarín, a Basque professional handball player. "The King knows how to distribute things symbolically," Salvador Giner says. "One daughter marries a Basque in Catalonia, the other"—Elena—"he names the Duchess of Lugo, which is in Galicia. Felipe is the Prince of Asturias." Baltasar Porcel adds that when the King visits Barcelona he intentionally gives his speeches partly in Catalan and partly in Spanish. "The fact that the King speaks Catalan when he's here makes it harder for the Spaniards to attack us," Porcel says.

When José María Aznar defeated Felipe González in the 1996 elections, he had to strike deals with the Catalans and the Basques in order to become prime minister, and when the haggling seemed to be going on forever Juan Carlos got involved. "The King got on the phone," says Richard Gardner, who was the United States Ambassador to Spain from 1993 to 1997. "He called Aznar, Pujol, and Arzallus"—the leader of the main Basque party—"and said, 'Spain cannot withstand a long period of uncertainty. Work it out. I'll be watching.'" According to Gardner, pressure from the King precipitated the deals that were struck soon afterward. In return for significant concessions, Aznar won enough votes to assume office.

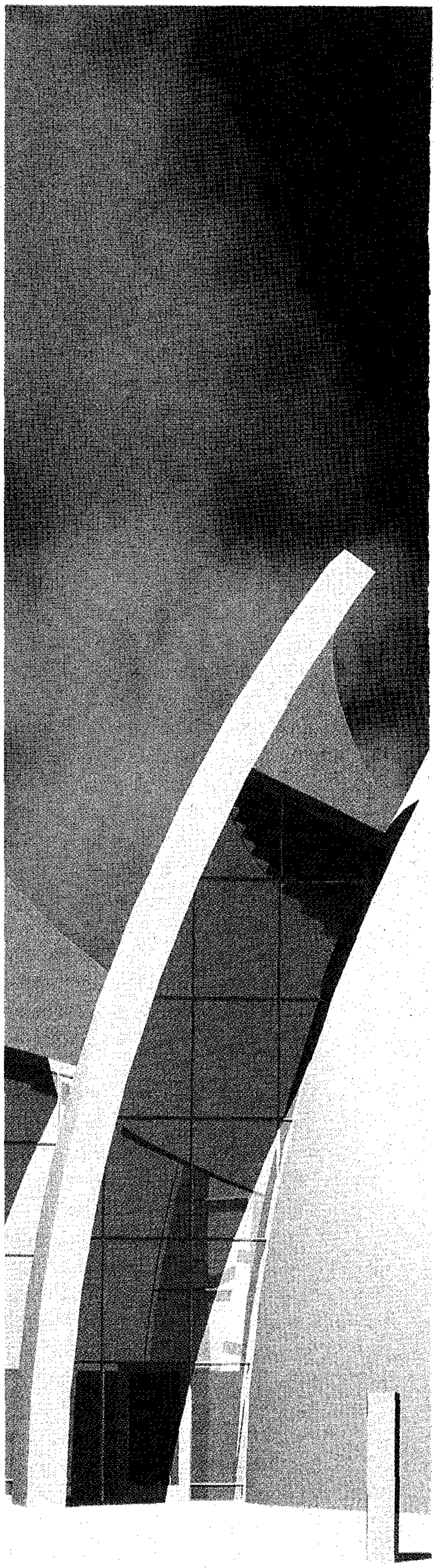
When Aznar made his first official visit to the United States, in April, 1997, the King again discreetly paved the way for him. A few weeks earlier, on a visit to New York, Juan Carlos had invited Gardner out to dinner. "The King took me to Plácido Domingo's restaurant," Gardner recalls. "He expressed his hope that everything possible could be done for Aznar, explaining that it was his first American visit, and that he lacked experience. He then asked—or insisted, really—that Madeline Albright be there when Aznar came, and insisted that I write out a note, which he dictated then and there, to her. He reminded her that she was Prince Felipe's professor at Georgetown. Later, I saw Madeline. She said, 'Oh dear, I'm supposed to go to Moscow!' But she got a later flight so that she could stay and see Aznar."

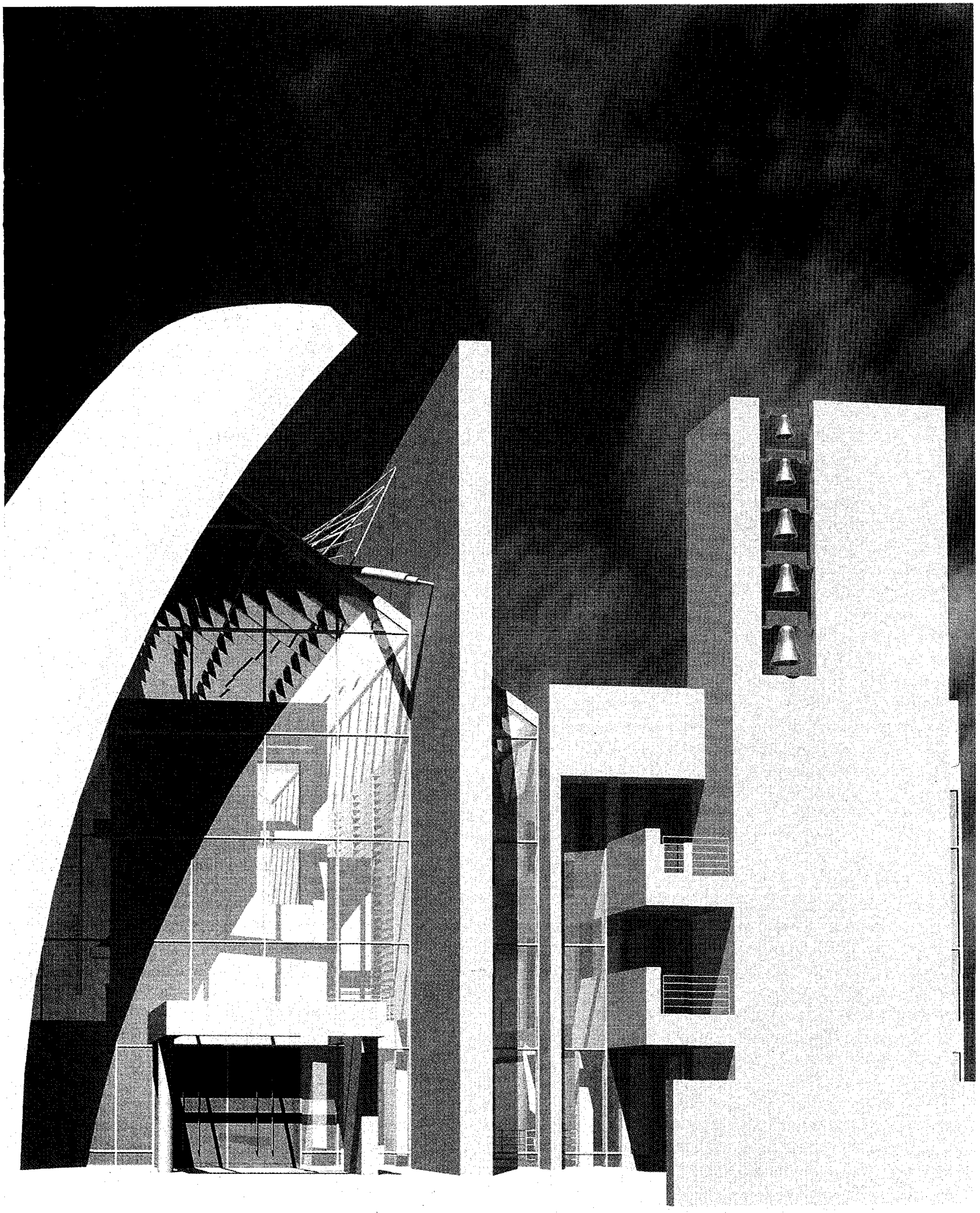
During a ceremony to inaugurate the new Juan Carlos Center at New York University, Gardner noticed that the King handed an envelope to Hillary Clinton, who had come up from Washington for the occasion. "Later on, I saw the letter," Gardner says. "In it, the King asked Clinton to come two days early to the NATO summit in Madrid and go to Majorca with him. Across the top of the letter, Clinton had written 'HRC'—as the President refers to Hillary—'thinks it's a great idea. Let's do it.'"

The idea, according to Gardner, was that the Clintons would have "a little R. and R." on the King's yacht, the Fortuna. "A week before Clinton's

HEAVEN'S WINDOW

Richard Meier's recent commission, a church for the Vatican on the outskirts of Rome, marks a turning point in the architect's career. The building's three parallel curving planes of concrete, set on the ground and anchored to glass roofs, represent the sixty-three-year-old Meier's first attempt to deal with what Le Corbusier once termed "ineffable space"—the irrational and the unexplainable. Pope John Paul II, having given his assent to the "Church of the Year 2000" project, wanted to meet the architect. "I got to the Vatican, and I found that the model we had sent was barely lit," Meier recalled last week. "So I asked the Swiss Guards to get a lamp. Well, they may be good at guarding, but they are not so good at finding things, and there was no lamp. It's just my meshugaas, I know, but the Pope should not see the model in the dark. Then he came in, followed by television cameras, and their lights lit the model perfectly. I told the Pope I could only imagine how Michelangelo must have felt when he brought the model of the dome of St. Peter's to Pope Julius II, and he was very gracious."





COURTESY RICHARD MEIER & PARTNERS

visit," Gardner says, "an article appeared in *ABC*"—a Spanish daily—"mentioning Clinton's sailing plans and that Aznar and his wife would also be on the boat. This was a surprise to me, so I made a call to find out." Gardner says that the White House was as surprised as he was at the news that Aznar was included on the Fortuna guest list. Clinton didn't want to have to engage in impromptu summitry with the Spanish Prime Minister. "The White House asked me to call the palace and say it would be best if Aznar didn't come."

Gardner complied, but the reaction from Viscount Fernando Almansa, the King's chief of staff, was curt. "He told me, 'It's the King's yacht and the King invites whomever he wants.' I said, 'Yes, I understand,' and went back and told the White House I thought it would be best if the matter was dropped. In the end, they all went out on the yacht for five hours—the Spanish Royal Family, the Clintons, Chelsea, and the Aznars. Later, in Madrid, in the President's limousine, I asked Clinton how it had gone. He said, 'Great! I had five hours with the King and the Prime Minister discussing what kind of world we want for our children.' I asked him, 'Who interpreted?' 'The King!' he said. So Aznar had an unprecedented five hours with Clinton, something few foreign heads of state *ever* get. And that would not have happened if not for the King."

LAST month, when the tiff over the King's Cuba trip flared up, Prime Minister Aznar was accused of having an "inferiority complex" in the face of the King's diplomatic skills. "The King is a tough act to follow," a senior government aide says. "He is multilingual, he's known every President since J.F.K. His experience counts for a lot. Who's Aznar?"

The King's record as a promoter of Spain abroad has been particularly successful, and, in early April, Aznar wisely backed down on the issue of the Cuba trip and named a new ambassador, thus paving the way for the King to go to Havana. On his first trip to Latin America, in 1976, Juan Carlos was greeted by children in the streets of Bogotá yelling "Our King is back!" For most of this century, Spain was in a poor position to sell itself abroad. But its transition to democracy is widely admired by Latin-American countries that are themselves shaking off dictatorships, and its political influence in Europe through the E.C. and NATO makes it even more attractive to them. There has been a veritable flood of Spanish investment in the region. As much as sixty per cent of Spain's private-sector foreign investment, an amount totalling some seventeen billion dollars, was poured into Latin America in the first eight months of 1997 alone, and Spanish investment in Cuba is now so visible that Cubans joke that the Spaniards have embarked on a "reconquest" of the island they lost a hundred years ago.

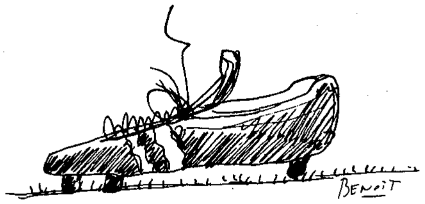
Spain is in much better shape economically than it was when Juan Carlos became King. In 1975, when he took office, the gross national product was about forty billion dollars. Today it is almost five hundred billion dollars. The stock market hit all-time highs in early April, and, though afflicted with a disturbingly high unemployment rate, Spain is one of the first E.C. member states to have fulfilled the Maastricht guidelines for entry into the single-European-currency union slated for next year.

One thing that has not changed significantly, however, is the way business is conducted in Spain. Theft of public funds, bribes, kickbacks, nepotism, and general corruption are common. One of the reasons Felipe González's Socialist Party lost the election in 1996 was that it was involved in so many scandals. Until recently, the King was not publicly tainted by this. Under the constitution, "the person of the King is inviolable and cannot be held accountable," and the Spanish press has always been very cautious in addressing any stories that might implicate him in a scandal.

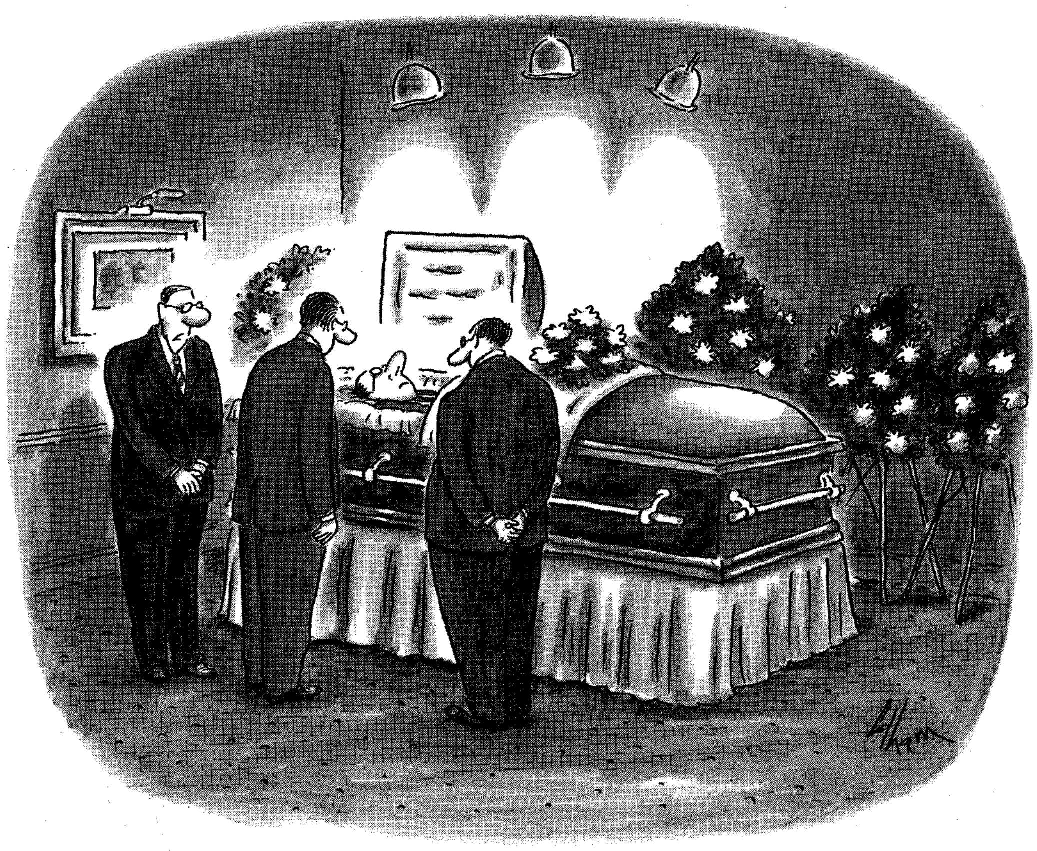
The Royal Family's finances are the most sensitive aspect of its carefully guarded life. Politicians, royal historians, biographers, and journalists who cover the monarchy all repeat, mantra-like, that "this is not a rich royal family," pointing out that the Bourbons lost their property when Alfonso XIII left Spain. During their long exile, Don Juan and his family were kept going by monthly tithes extended to them by a few noble families. Exactly what property, if any, the Royal Family owns today isn't publicly known. The chalet they use regularly in the Pyrenees is on loan from a ski resort, while La Zarzuela and Marivent, their summer palace in Majorca, belong to Patrimonio Nacional, a National Heritage-style organization "in the service of the Crown." The King gets a stipend of approximately seven million dollars a year from the state, out of which he pays some of his expenses, the salaries of his household staff, and taxes.

Traditionally, the King's financial affairs were not discussed, but that began to change in 1992, when it was discovered that Juan Carlos had "disappeared" for a few days. Prime Minister González was asked by reporters where he was, and he said he didn't know. The King turned up in Switzerland, although it appeared that he had signed a law into effect as if he'd been in Madrid. The press began to speculate furiously about the motives for his trip. "It seems he was with a woman," says Albert Montagut, the editor of the Catalonian edition of *El Mundo*. This was the first time anything negative about the King had been reported, and it opened the door to further scrutiny. "He's had to tread carefully since then," says Montagut.

What makes the King most vulnerable is his potential role as the ultimate influence peddler. Among his more ardent defenders, any suggestion that he may have engaged in unethical behavior for personal gain is angrily dismissed. Others suggest that, if he is guilty of anything, it is friendliness, and that as King he runs the risk of acquiring friends who seek benefits from their access to him. But some concede that this may not be the whole story, either. "Juan Carlos probably earns money from opening doors," a veteran palace observer acknowledges, pointing out that the practice of "putting peo-



ple together for a fee" is common among European royalty.



"The death of a businessperson is especially sad."

"THE money issue *is* important," Charles Powell says. "In the eighties, when a lot of people were making a fast buck, the King felt left out, and he asked people to invest money for him. One assumes that's how his friendship with Mario Conde began." Conde was the chairman of a major bank, Banesto, and an important figure in the financial world during the booming eighties. In March, he began serving a four-and-a-half-year jail sentence for embezzlement, and he has been charged with various other financial misdeeds, for which he is now standing trial. Before his fall from grace, in 1994, he was close to the palace and is rumored to have been involved in at least one money-making deal involving the King.

Asked about the allegations, Baltasar Porcel, who is a political commentator for newspapers and radio, and who sometimes advises the King on Catalonian affairs, chooses his words carefully. "The King is a friendly man, and he has *been* the friend of Mario Conde," he says. "And if the King has been Mario Conde's friend for years, it's logical that Conde would try and accentuate the connection now that he's in trouble."

Conde seemed to be doing just that in mid-March, when he claimed that in 1989 he had paid the equivalent of two million dollars to Adolfo Suárez, the former prime minister and a close ally of Juan Carlos. The money was allegedly a contribution to Suárez's party, in return for his help in resolving a bank merger. (Suárez denies this.) Conde also managed to note that he had been close to Viscount Almansa, the King's chief of staff, for many years. Conde-watchers have interpreted his mention of Almansa as a warning shot fired across the King's bow.

What worries some of the King's allies is that Mario Conde may actually possess evidence implicating the King in shady dealings. "Conde has tapes, documents, and that kind of thing," says a well-connected businessman who has known Juan Carlos since the nineteen-sixties. "Very incriminating. It would be terrible if he decides to bring it out." But, he adds, he is guardedly confident that Conde will refrain from doing so, since he is believed to have pinned his hopes on being included in an "end-of-the-millennium grand amnesty" by the conservative government. The King, he says, is Conde's "last card," one he would use only if he felt all his hopes of freedom were lost.

"The King has these little things, these negatives, which count against him," says the baron who gave me the tour of his ancestral castle. "But, to be fair, one has to take the whole picture of his life, and, the way I see it, the positive far outweighs the negative." The Socialist in Barcelona who described himself as "passionately loyal" to the King agrees. "The figure of the King is the best thing we could have invented for the Spanish political system. That is why the majority of Spaniards want to protect him.... If he were to do his job badly, or if we had a different King, none of this would be worth anything. But as long as the King doesn't break the rules of the game the monarchy won't break, either."

The "rules" in Spain have changed utterly since the days of Juan Carlos's grandfather, and of Franco. The irony is that the King owes both his accountability and his influence to the democratic system he helped put in place. The King is no longer immune, but since the monarchy is useful and practical—like primogeniture for the baron's former vassals—he is unlikely to lose the people's support. "The monarchy is a mirror in which people can contemplate themselves," Charles Powell says. "The main reason the Royal Family is so popular is that it embodies the new democratic system. If you criticize the monarchy, you're questioning everything that's happened since the death of Franco. If you question the form of government, you open a Pandora's box and everything falls out of place. The monarchy has been useful. In twenty years it may not be, in which case the Royal Family may have to pack their bags." ◆

PERSONAL HISTORY

THE KLEMPERER DIARIES

For the twelve years that Hitler was in power, a Jewish academic kept a record of life in Dresden. The diaries, never published during the author's lifetime, offer an unprecedented picture of a city during the Third Reich—until it was firebombed by the Allies.

BY VICTOR KLEMPERER

Victor Klemperer was Jewish by birth, but he was not a typical Dresden Jew. He converted to Protestantism, fought in the First World War, earning a Distinguished Service Medal, and married an "Aryan." As a result, he was spared the fate of most of the city's Jewish population.

Klemperer's wife, Eva, was a pianist by training, but her career took second place to her husband's work on the French Enlightenment. His diaries mention other members of his family: his brother-in-law, Martin Sussmann, a doctor whose license was revoked when it was decreed that most Jews could no longer practice medicine; his sister, Grete, who suffered a mental breakdown and died during the war; his brother, Georg, who emigrated to the United States in the mid-thirties.

Why didn't Klemperer emigrate? In part because he believed that he was a German before anything else. Before he lost his job at Dresden Technical College, in 1935, he and his wife began building a house in Dölzschen, a village just outside Dresden, where Klemperer could work and Eva could tend the rose garden and fruit trees. The couple was reluctant to give up the house, and, by the time it was taken from them, it was no longer possible for them to leave Germany.

Klemperer's diaries were not written for publication. As he explains, he is attempting not to write a "history" but simply to bear witness to "the everyday life of tyranny." That, he says, is his heroism. When Klemperer died, in 1960, his widow gave his diaries to the Sächsische Landesbibliothek in Dresden, where they remained until the eighties, when a literary critic and admirer of Klemperer's work, Walter Nowojski, embarked on the task of transcribing the thousands of handwritten pages—from which this edited selection has been taken.

1933

FEBRUARY 21ST: For three weeks now, I've been depressed over the reactionary government. I am not writing a history. But I shall nevertheless record my embitterment, which is greater than I would have imagined I was still capable of feeling. It is a disgrace that gets worse with every day that passes. And there's not a sound from anyone, and everyone's keeping his head down, the Jewry most of all and its democratic press.

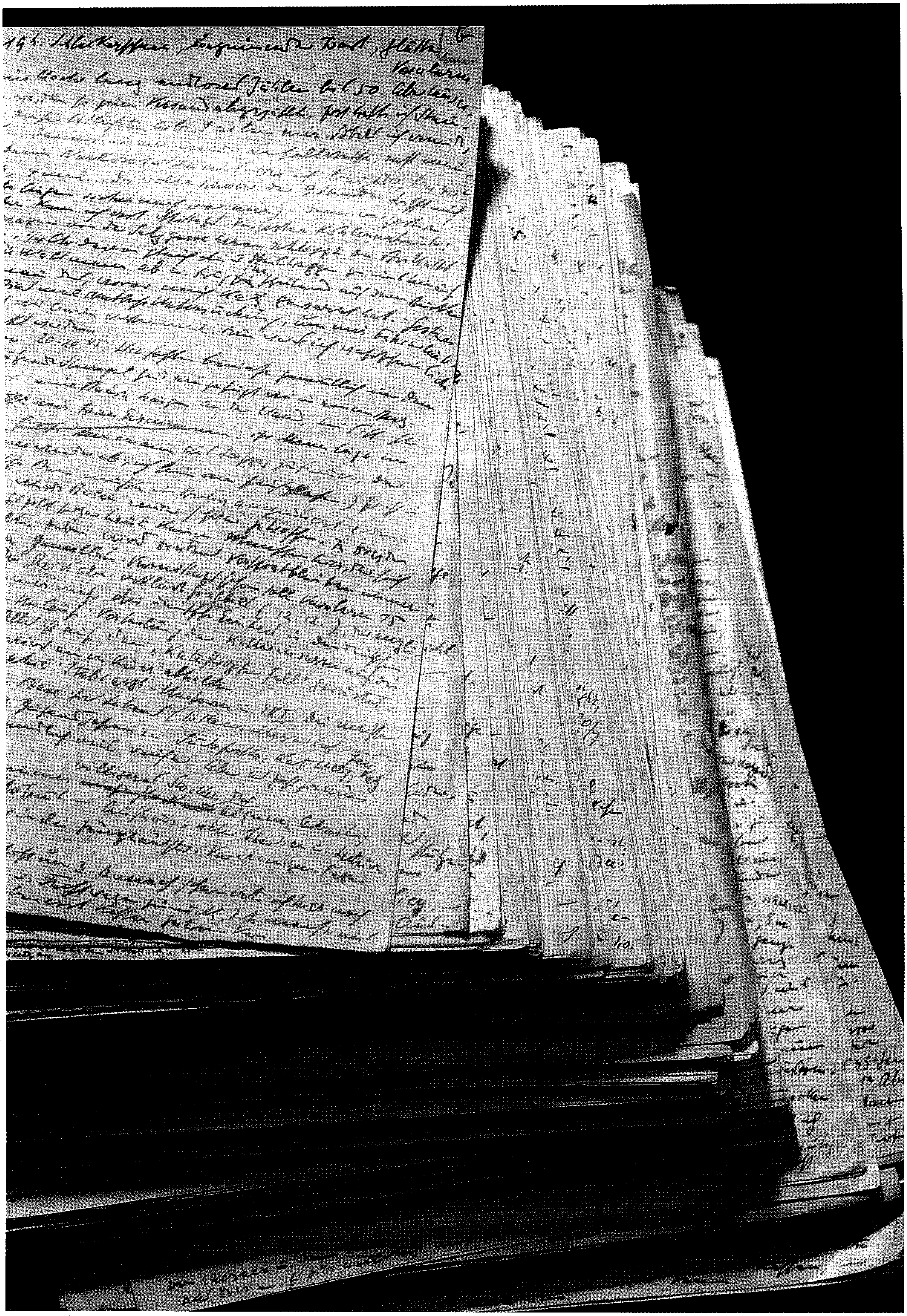
On February 5th, one week after Hitler's appointment, we were at the Blumenfelds'. Raab made a big speech and declared that it was necessary to vote for the German Nationals, so as to strengthen the right wing of the coalition. I vehemently took issue with him. More interesting is his opinion that Hitler will end in religious madness. . . . What is strangest of all is how one is blind in the face of events, how no one has a clue to the real balance of power.

MARCH 10TH: On January 30th, Hitler became Chancellor. What, until the election on March 5th, I had called terror was a mild prelude. On Saturday the fourth, I heard part of Hitler's speech from Königsberg. The front of a hotel at the railway station illuminated, a procession of torchbearers, swastika flagbearers on the balconies, and loudspeakers. I understood only occasional words. But the tone! The unctuous bawling, true bawling, of a priest.

On Sunday I voted for the Democrats, Eva for the Centrists. Then the tremendous election victory of the National Socialists. Their vote doubled in Bavaria. Directly afterward, the Central Association of Jewish Citizens in Thuringia was banned because it had criticized the government in "Talmudic fashion." Day after day since then commissioners have been appointed, provincial governments trampled underfoot,

The Klemperers in the nineteen-thirties and, opposite, pages from the diary. "We have both been unceasingly tormented by the question 'Go or stay?'" Klemperer wrote in 1938. "To go too soon, to stay too late? To go where we have nothing, to remain in this corruption?"

COURTESY DR. HADWIG KLEMPERER, DRESDEN; OPPOSITE, HARF ZIMMERMANN/OSTKREUZ



flags raised, buildings taken over, people shot, newspapers banned, etc., etc. A complete revolution and party dictatorship. And all opposing forces as if vanished from the face of the earth.

How long will I keep my post?

MARCH 30TH: I feel shame more than fear, shame for Germany. I have truly always felt German. I have always imagined that the twentieth century and Mittel-europa were different from the fourteenth century and Romania. In a toy shop: a children's ball with the swastika.

SEPTEMBER 6TH: On Saturday, September 2nd, at the Köhlers'. Pleasant and peaceful as always. It does one good to be with "Aryans" to whom the present tyranny is as terrible as it is to us. After twelve o'clock they accompanied us home on foot. We invited them up for a tot of whiskey and it began to rain. We sat up till half past two and got to bed at three.

I write at length about pleasures; they are the exception, and in general our life proceeds very unhappily. Eva is forever ailing and seriously depressed; I myself am constantly plagued by heart and eye trouble. And there is the constant pointless tyranny, uncertainty, and dishonorableness of our position in the Third Reich. My hopes of a swift about-face are fading. The streets are crowded with Storm Troopers. The Nuremberg Party Rally has just been raging. The press worships Hitler like God and the prophets rolled into one.

NOVEMBER 9TH: At the first lecture Monday (French Renaissance) five people; for Renaissance lyric poetry, four; today at Corneille, two. The mass of the students are uninterruptedly taken up with election propaganda; they must organize parades, "publicize" in every possible way—the most extreme pressure. I must now seriously, very seriously, reckon with the loss of my chair. And what am I to do if I am dismissed here? I can do nothing practical, not even speak and write French. I can only do literary history. It is with a certain lethargy that I let everything take its course.

1934

JANUARY 16TH: Annemarie Köhler was here on Sunday afternoon. As a belated Christmas present she brought a new book by Thomas Mann—and I have not seen it announced anywhere. The press is no longer allowed to write anything about this notorious liberalistic author.

I am afraid after every lecture, every seminar exercise. If one of my half-dozen students were to betray me after all . . . I never raise my arm when I enter. And in the seminar and in a couple of minutes of conversation afterward, dangerous words slip out.

AUGUST 4TH: At nine o'clock on August 2nd, the President dies; one hour later his office and the Chancellor's office are united in Hitler's person. By half past six the troops in Dresden have sworn their allegiance to Hitler, and everything is completely calm. Our butcher says indifferently, "Who needs to vote first? It just costs a lot of money." The people hardly notice this coup d'état; it all takes place in silence, drowned out by hymns to the dead Hindenburg. I would swear that millions upon millions have no idea what a monstrous thing has occurred. Eva says, "And we belong to this band of slaves." Since when does one swear in the Army and have an "election" afterward?

1935

FEBRUARY 2ND: On Wednesday, January 30th, Eva had to have a root removed under anesthetic. I find it frightful to watch as she is unconscious. What use is the calculation that there is only one fatality per hundred thousand anesthetizations? Who can give me a guarantee that the black lot will not be drawn here? Today, on leaving, Eva smoked a cigarette to the end outside the dentist's door. So we arrived a moment later than usual at the stop on Albert Platz, where there is a flimsy wood-and-cardboard construction advertising Winter Aid. A strong west wind has been blowing uninterruptedly since yesterday. As we are three steps away from it, a column sways and falls. The large group of waiting people scatters; two elderly people, a man and a woman, are struck and lie beneath it. The old man, his face red, screams and is pulled out and carried away, the lady limps pitifully and is led away to a car. It could have happened to us, too. The black lot can be drawn anywhere.

MAY 2ND: On Tuesday morning, without any previous notification: "On the basis of Para. 6 of the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service I have . . . recommended your dismissal. Notice of dismissal enclosed. The Commissary Director of the Ministry for Popular Education." I telephoned the university; no one there had a clue. At first I felt alternately numb and slightly romantic; now there is only bitterness and wretchedness.

My situation will be very difficult. I shall still receive my salary, eight hundred marks, until the end of July, and after that a pension, which will amount to approximately four hundred marks.

MAY 4TH: Stepun reports that my chair will be occupied again. So I have been kicked out not to save money but as a Jew. Even though I served in the field, etc. etc.

MAY 7TH: I said to Stepun, "None of my colleagues bother about me. They think, Another one gone. Who will be next? Me? In Flanders we were once running through machine-gun fire, I stumbled over a rail, fell, collected myself, reached cover after the others. A comrade looked up and said indifferently, 'So you're still here, too? I thought you were dead.' That is what it is like today among the professors."

Stepun: "You are right, no doubt—war mentality, only much worse."

MAY 30TH: There seems to be no prospect for me abroad. Blumenfeld was in Zurich and spoke to Privy Councillor Demuth about my case. Demuth's letter to me had been nothing but courtesy and consolation; de facto I had no chance at all. He could find places for natural scientists, but he had been able to place only three scholars from the humanities, and Blumenfeld was the third.

A letter from Georg. He will "of course" put six thousand marks at my disposal (how rich he must be! but how fundamentally decently he has dealt with the matter!) but does not understand why I cling to my house and to Germany. If civil rights are taken from us, he says he will go to America, where he can still "earn a little" as a doctor. He would rather starve there than live in comfort and dishonor here in Germany. Very nicely put. But how can I get out? And with what can I "earn a little" anywhere else?

1936

FEBRUARY 11TH: The situation ever darker. I am the only Jew in the community of Dölzschen, at least the only prominent one. Kalix, the mayor, has already raised difficulties. He complained about me last summer when we built the extension to our house. I was "disfiguring" the neighborhood with tarboard roofing. I did not seem to know how things stood. I was a guest here, and he had a mind to take me into custody for a night.

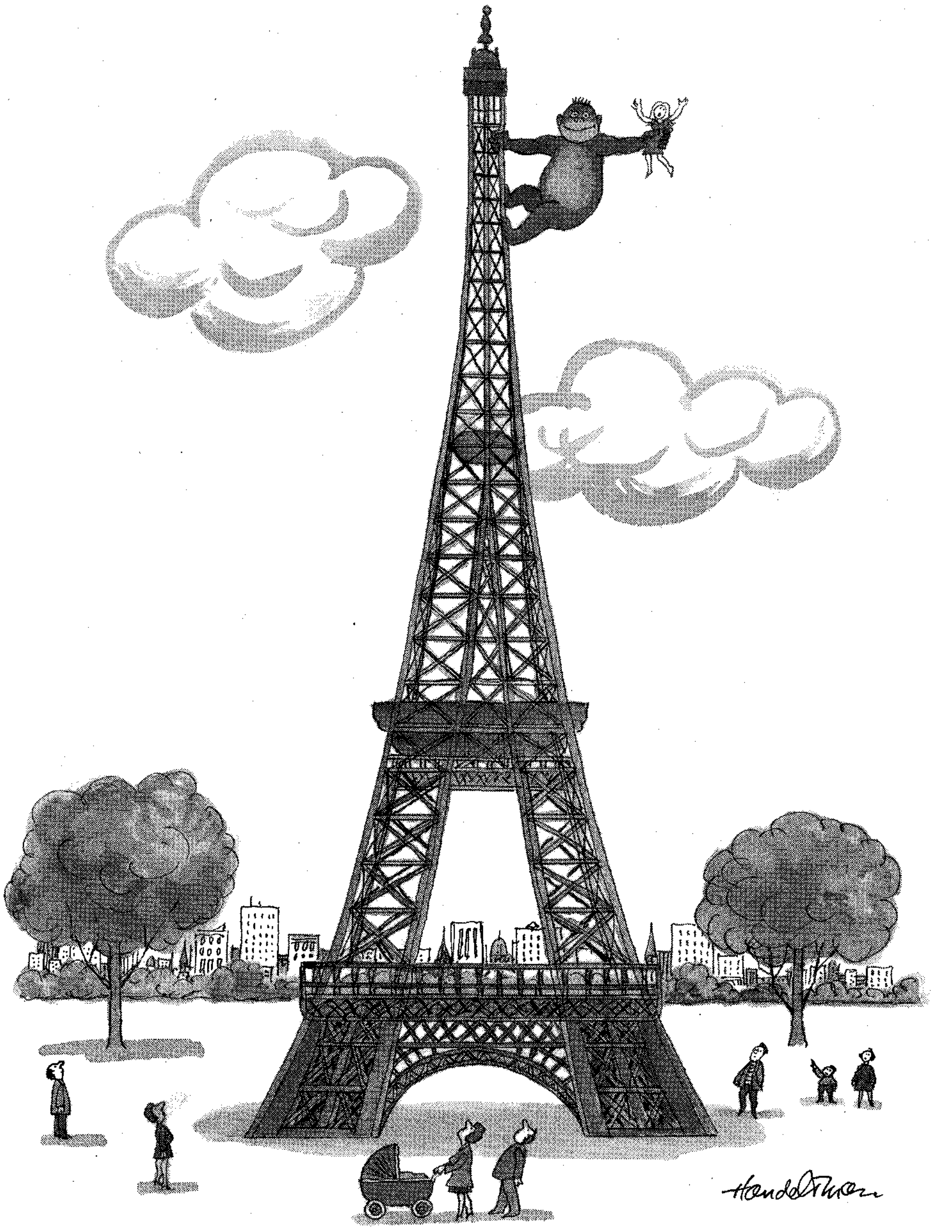
A gentleman addressed me on Postplatz: "Do you not recognize me?" It was Dr. Kleinstück, rector of Vitzthum Grammar School. "I passed you recently," he said. "You saw me and looked away. I was afraid you looked away because you thought I would not greet you." I was moved. I told him about my situation and added that I had been told that he was now a big Nazi. He: "Oh, God, one can never do the right thing for everyone. From one day to the next I don't know whether I shall still have my post."

MAY 16TH: The mood of our wedding anniversary? I feel old, I have no confidence in my heart. I cannot imagine how I would bear the pressure, the humiliation, the uncertainty, the loneliness without Eva. And I no longer believe that the present government has enemies inside Germany. The majority of the people are content, a small group accepts Hitler as the lesser evil, no one really wants to be rid of him—all see in him the liberator in foreign affairs. They fear the Russian way of life as a child fears the bogeyman and believe, insofar as they are not honestly carried away, that it is inopportune in terms of realpolitik to be outraged at such details as the suppression of civil liberties, the persecution of the Jews, the falsification of scholarly truths, the systematic destruction of all morality. And all are afraid for their livelihood, their lives—all are such terrible cowards. Can I reproach them with it? During my last year in my post I, too, swore an oath to Hitler. I have remained in the country. I am no better than my Aryan fellow-creatures.

1937

MARCH 27TH: Week by week we find ourselves in worse straits. My suit is fraying, our home is thick with dirt, neither house nor garden is finished, and I count every penny. We are so proletarianized and constrained that often I wish never to wake up again. Nevertheless, what Johanna Krüger wrote to us after her visit in January is right: "You still have so much." In our great loneliness we are perhaps even closer to one another than in the past. For myself the feeling of "How much longer?" no doubt plays a part.

AUGUST 17TH: In *Der Stürmer* (which is displayed at every corner) I recently saw a picture: two girls in swimsuits at a seaside resort. Above it, "Prohibited for Jews"; underneath it, "How nice that it's just us now!" Then I remembered a long-forgotten incident. September, 1900 or 1901, in Landsberg. In the lower sixth we were four Jews among sixteen, in the upper sixth three among eight. There was little trace of anti-Semitism among either the teachers or the pupils. In fact none at all. I knew only that a Jew could become neither a fraternity member as a student nor an



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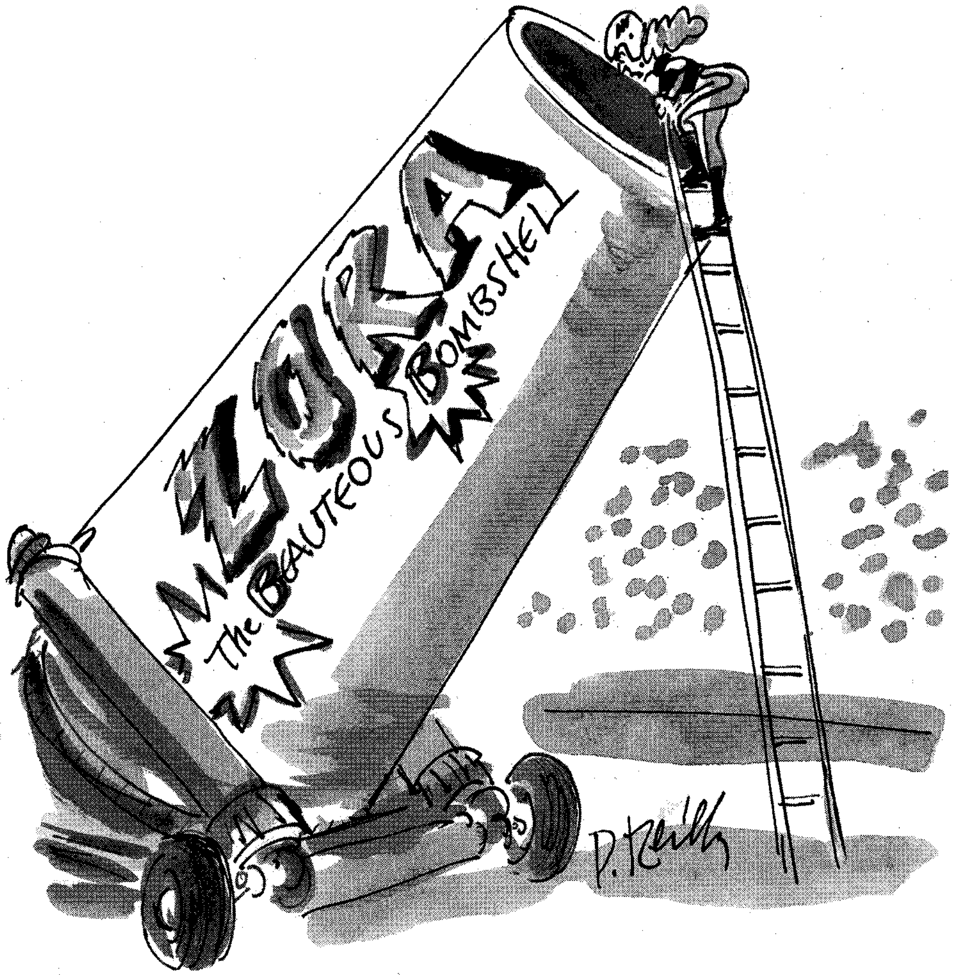

"Stop whining or this is your last Take Our Daughters to Work Day."

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officer in the Army. On the Day of Atonement—Yom Kippur—the Jews did not attend classes. The next day our comrades told us, laughing and without the least malice (just as the words themselves were also uttered only jokingly by the altogether humane teacher), that the math teacher had said to the reduced class, "Today it's just us." In retrospect these words take on a quite horrible significance: to me they confirm the claim of the National Socialists to express the true opinion of the German people. Thus I have lost my Fatherland not only outwardly, for even if the government should change one day my inner sense of belonging is gone.

1938

NOVEMBER 22ND-25TH: First of all it was probably the desire to get a little bit further with my work before I made another diary entry, and then misfortune followed misfortune, one could say catastrophe. In the middle of October an ordinary influenza. Following that a quite unfamiliar bladder complaint, ever more horrid anuria, and no doctor here to whom I could turn. [Aryan doctors were no longer allowed to treat Jews.] When it became completely unbearable we drove to Berlin to see my brother-in-law.

Sussmann was waiting for us. He examined me after coffee and was rather shocked. He came again after supper and brought a catheter with him, secretly, as priests brought the sacrament during the French Revolution. He explained that I was in urgent need of longer treatment, possibly in a hospital bed. We spent the night in a very depressed mood, especially as the evening before very unpleasant things had been reported from the concentration camp near Weimar (Buchenwald, I think). The next morning we agreed that I should drive back immediately for treatment at the Pirna clinic that very afternoon. But I must at all costs say nothing about Sussmann's having treated me already.

At ten, therefore, a hurried drive straight back. A few miles past Elsterwerda, at the village of Weinberge, a motorcyclist wants to cross us and does not stop. I become nervous and brake; the car starts skidding sideways, rolls over an embankment, and with a jolt I am lying on my back in a field, my face stinging. I see Eva standing on the other side of the car, bent over, her hands covering her face, blood running down. The motorcyclist is there, shouting defensively, "There was no need to brake like that." Just then a car halts, a young man gets out, goes to feel Eva's nose.

"Are you a doctor?"

"Yes. Nothing is broken. It doesn't appear to be anything more than a nosebleed."

I to the doctor: "I'm ill. I must be catheterized today."

"I'll take you in my car—I have only one more visit to make here." In Elsterwerda a large clinic. I have to get on the operating table for the catheter. I tell the doctor I am not Aryan. He deals with me quickly and then is gone.

Half an hour later we are at a repair shop. The car has literally to be dug out of the field. The engine is intact, but the steering wheel has been torn away. The door is secured with string, the hood is half open. Will I get to Dresden like this? Very difficult to steer with the spokes alone. At home at ten, in bed an hour later.

By the time I got to the Pirna clinic, about a week and a half later, the Grünspan affair had supervened. I'd heard that, the night before, the synagogue here had been "spontaneously" burned to the ground and Jewish windows smashed. I do not need to describe the historic events of the following days [Kristallnacht], the acts of violence, our depression.

NOVEMBER 27TH: On the morning of the eleventh, two policemen accompanied by "a resident of Dölzschen." Did I have any weapons? Certainly my sabre, perhaps even my bayonet, as a war memento, but I wouldn't know where. "We have to help you find them." The house was searched for hours. At the beginning Eva made the mistake of quite innocently telling one of the policemen he should not go through the clean-linen cupboard without washing his hands. The man, considerably affronted, could hardly be calmed down. A second, younger policeman was more friendly; the civilian was the worst. They rummaged through everything; chests and wooden constructions Eva had made were broken open with an axe. The sabre was found in a suitcase in the attic, the bayonet was not found. At one point, when Eva wanted to fetch one of her tools, the young policeman ran after her. The older one called out, "You are making us suspicious, you are making your situation worse." At about one o'clock, the civilian and the older policeman left the house, the young one remained and took a statement. He was good-natured and courteous; I had the feeling he himself found the thing embarrassing. Then the three of them appeared to hold a conference in the garden. The young policeman returned. "You must dress and come to the court building with me. There's nothing to fear, you will probably (!) be back by evening." At four o'clock, I was on the street again with a curious feeling: free—but for how long? Since then we have both been unceasingly tormented by the question "Go or stay?" To go too soon, to stay too late? To go where we have nothing, to remain in this corruption?

DECEMBER 3RD: Yesterday afternoon at the library, Striege or Streigel, who is in charge of the lending section, an old Stahlhelm man of middling position and years, asked me to come into the back room and showed me the total ban on using the library. The absolute end. The man was distressed beyond words. I had to calm him. He stroked my hand, he could not hold back the tears, he stammered, "I am boiling over inside." Could I not give my manuscripts to one of the consulates for safekeeping? . . . Could I not get out? . . . But these few sympathizing and in despair are isolated, and they, too, are afraid.

DECEMBER 6TH: I note the ever-more-frequent phrase "It is in accordance with the healthy sense of justice of the people," which is always printed when some new atrocity is initiated. The healthy sense of justice of every German manifested itself yesterday in a decree from Police Minister Himmler with immediate effect: Withdrawal of driving licenses from all Jews. Justification: because of the Grünspan murder Jews are "unreliable" and are therefore not allowed to sit at the wheel; also their being permitted to drive offends the German traffic community, especially as they have presumptuously made use of the Reich highways built by German workers' hands. This prohibition hits us terribly hard. It has now been exactly three years since I learned to drive.

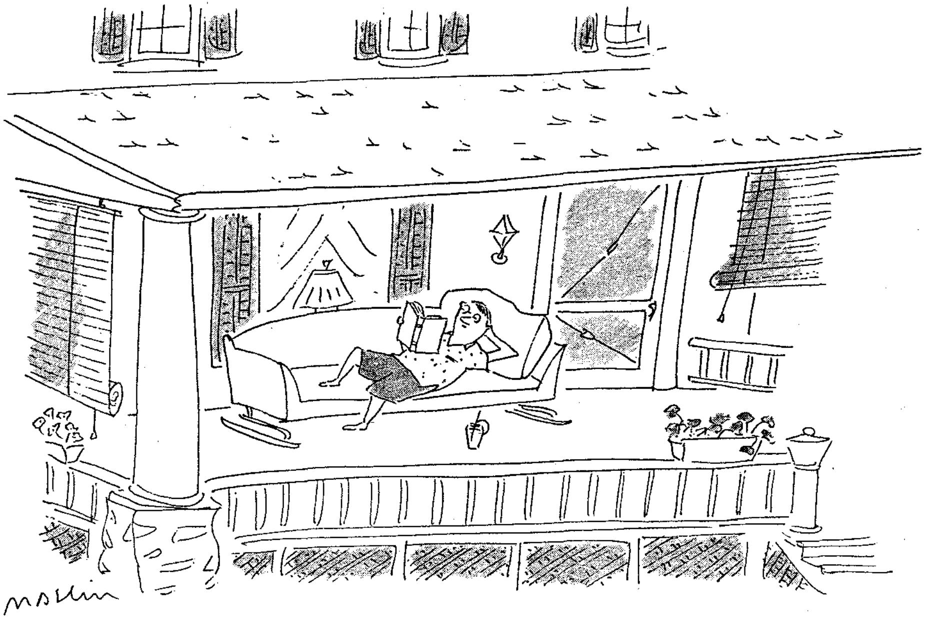
DECEMBER 15TH: Shattering letters from Sussmann and the Jelskis. Both letters, in part, are the same, word for word: We go as beggars, dependent on the support of our children. Sussmann has gone to Stockholm, to live with his youngest daughter, who has married there, the Jelskis to Lilly in Montevideo.

1939

JANUARY 1ST: Yesterday afternoon, Fräulein Gump told us terrible things from Frankfurt and her home town, Ulm. All the male teachers from the Philanthropin were sent to Buchenwald. When there was vandalism and looting everywhere, the local Army general inquired in Berlin whether he was allowed to intervene—but then did nothing. In Ulm, the rabbi was chased around the market fountain with his beard alight—chased by a "mob" (that is, by "people," and not just by Storm Troopers carrying out orders!)—and was hit on the hands when he tried to touch his beard; afterward he was in the hospital with burns.

JANUARY 10TH: There is no German or West European Jewish question. Whoever recognizes one only adopts or confirms the false thesis of the National Socialists and serves its cause. Until 1933, and for a good century before that, the German Jews were entirely German and nothing else. Proof: the thousands upon thousands of "half" and "quarter" Jews. Jews and Germans lived and worked together without friction in all spheres of life. The German Jews were part of the German nation; they had their place in German life, and were in no way a burden on the whole society. They were and remain (even if they now no longer wish to remain so) Germans—mostly intellectuals and educated people. There is only one solution to the German or West European Jewish question: the defeat of its inventors.

AUGUST 29TH: Masses of people were called up for military service during the night. In the evening, I went to the sta-



"Night fell over the land like an L. L. Bean navy-blue summerweight one-hundred-per-cent-goose-down-filled comforter covering up an Eddie Bauer hunter-green one-hundred-per-cent-combed-cotton, machine-washable king-size fitted sheet."

tion. The people there looked considerably depressed. There was a crowd around the notice announcing that rail traffic would be reduced. On Sunday, there was the suggestion that we should give our little tomcat an easy death by injection, since he eats only meat and really needs two hundred and fifty grams a day—and all three of us are now supposed to get only a thousand grams per week. Since then we have switched him to fish.

September 3rd: On September 1st, the young butcher's lad came and told us that there had been a wireless announcement. The war with Poland was under way, England and France remained neutral. I said to Eva that a morphine injection was the best thing for us—our life was over. A little later, we heard Hitler's agitated voice, then the usual roaring, but could not make anything out. Then down in town the dispatch about the outbreak of war. I asked several people whether the English had really declared their neutrality. Only an intelligent salesgirl in a cigar shop on Chemnitzer Platz said, "No—that would really be a joke!"

September 10th: Eva says, "The war is being covered up." This is true. There has been no mobilization; people were fetched one by one from their beds. There are no casualty lists and no flags, even though Warsaw has already been reached. Nothing is said about the front in the West. This is the view that has to be maintained: war only with Poland and the quickest possible victory. But at the same time there are constantly intensified measures which point to a long war. Yesterday, flour was added to the list of restricted foodstuffs. Gas shortage, rationing, a threat to punish any "driving for pleasure." Yesterday for the first time in the Military Bulletin: two French aircraft shot down in the West. Until now France has not been mentioned at all as a belligerent. What has happened to the tremendous and annihilating air attack on England that was expected? What has happened to our absolute air security if the whole country has to be permanently blacked out?

December 9th: On Monday, I was at the Jewish Community House, beside the burned-down and levelled synagogue, to pay my tax and Winter Aid. Considerable activity: The coupons for gingerbread and chocolate were being cut from the food-ration cards, "in favor of those who have family members in the field." The clothing cards had to be surrendered as well: Jews receive clothing only on special application to the Community. Those were the kinds of small unpleasantnesses that no longer count. Then the Party official present wanted to talk to me: "We would in any case have informed you in the next few days. You must leave your house by the first of April; you can sell it, rent it out, leave it empty, that's your business, but you have to be out. You are entitled to a room. Since your wife is Aryan, you will be allocated two rooms if possible." The man was not at all uncivil, and he also completely appreciated the difficulties we shall face, without anyone at all benefitting as a result—the sadistic machine simply rolls over us.

December 16th: Last Sunday evening, Berger, who has a grocery shop around the corner, came to see us—very decent man, no Nazi. I had told his wife that we have to give up the house. He wants to rent it for a hundred marks—that is how much it costs us every month—and set up his shop in our music room. Agreed, if nothing has changed by April 1st.

1940

April 19th: I arranged a short-tenancy agreement with Berger, but the parish has forced a different agreement on me. According to it the house is rented out for two years; I am not allowed to enter it without permission from the local authorities; I am not allowed to make any demand of the tenant without permission. I grant him first right of purchase at the fixed price of sixteen thousand six hundred marks through entry of this paragraph in the land register. The contract is such a piece of extortion and instrument of future harassment that we wanted to sell the house to Berger right away. But we would thereby lose everything.

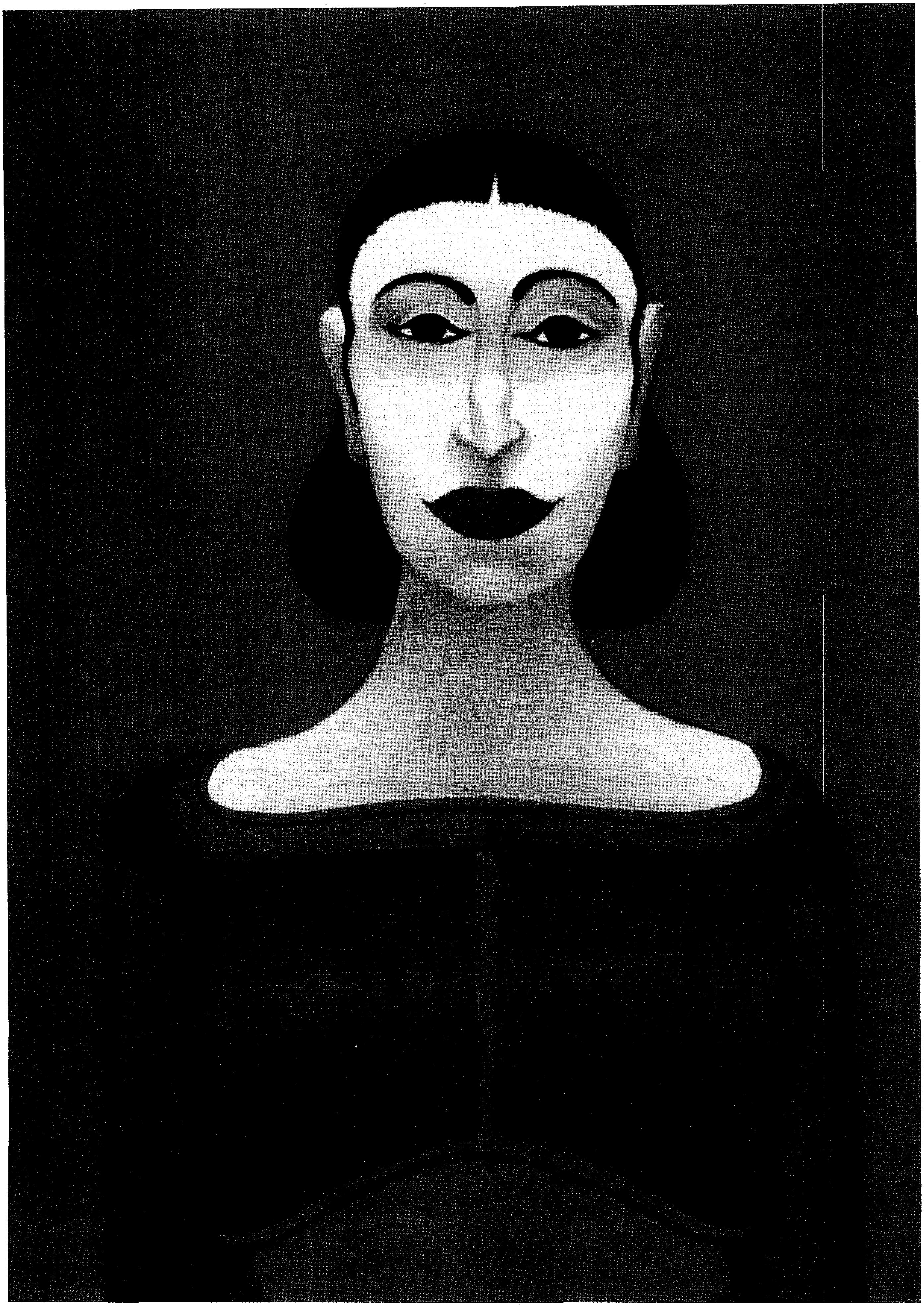
At the moment utter uncertainty. Estreicher at the Jewish Community says he will find something as good as possible for us, but as yet he has not and we must clear this house by May 25th. I am overcome by fear, but only intermittently; I cannot lose more than the house and my last penny.

April 29th: On Saturday, Estreicher, so far quite courteous, showed us two rooms in a villa on Caspar David Friedrich Strasse. Very nice, but also with great drawbacks. I was supposed to meet the co-tenant, a Frau Voss, on Monday and then discuss the matter further. But at my first question Estreicher became extremely presumptuous: I was ungrateful, I should be throwing my arms around him, I had to decide immediately, etc. He began to shout and threatened that in his omnipotence he would allocate me an impossible single room. I was enraged. I jumped up, struck the desk with my fist, and bellowed at him to behave like a gentleman. It was a frightful scene. Ultimately, I did not want to continue the quarrel. I said I was certainly indebted to him, only I simply could not tolerate his tone. He played the offended innocent who is used to ingratitude, the decent man who despite everything makes allowances for the "unworldliness" of the scholar. He signed the apartment over to me. We even shook hands. The man is worse than any real Nazi.

May 22nd: Principal activity of this day: burning, burning, burning for hours on end, heaps of letters, manu-

BELLA DONNA

Lorenzo Mattotti's vivid, sinuous illustrations appear in newspapers, books, and magazines (including this one) in Europe, Japan, and North America. This spring, his cover work for Le Monde's literary supplement is on view at the Gallerie Nuages, in Milan; his black-and-white comic book "Les Stigmates," a fable about a nonbeliever who wakes up one morning with the stigmata, will be published this June in Paris; and his six fantasies of female beauty, a series called "Fiori del Bene" (which includes "Iris," at right), have been published in a portfolio by the Treviso-based design firm Magis. "Iris is not stereotypically pretty—she is a woman with a forceful personality," Mattotti says. "I had no models, but I had the impression of having known the women I painted, and I want others to have that impression, too."



scripts. Irritates the eyes, the stuff has to be turned again and again, otherwise the manuscript pages, all on top of one another, only burn at the edges.

May 26th: Our new house: a handsome villa, too cramped, too "modern" in style, stuffed full of people who all share the same fate. Two rooms that do not have a connecting door. Hallway in between. Even today still a tangled chaos in both. The greatest loss of time is caused by the constant fussing interference of strangers. Frau Voss, fifties, very well-to-do, non-Aryan widow of the Aryan director of the Public Insurance Institute of Saxon Savings Banks, is a somewhat childish, barely educated, petty-bourgeois woman, tremendously talkative. She appears when Eva is still lying in bed; she breakfasts on the balcony. On the day we moved in she twice invited us for real tea; yesterday she prepared our plaice. We in turn had to help wash her crockery. Thus there is a very great promiscuity, which I hope will not lead to friction, but of course strains the nerves even without friction.

June 11th: Miserable evening in the Jews' House. Kreidl, Sr., said to me, "We live in a world that has gone. We still believe in England's strength. It is weak; it will become a very small island state. Italy with its Air Force will take everything it wants. Afterward, we Jews will be put up against the wall." Today I heard: A woman comes to see her wounded husband in the military hospital here; on entering the room she sees a completely mutilated person, an ear, half of the face, an arm have been torn off. She starts screaming. "It's the Jews' fault! It's the Jews' fault!" They really will put us up against the wall yet.

Although France seems lost, the newspaper gave me new courage. From the small print, the euphemisms and trivialization, I think I can conclude that England is far from thinking itself beaten and—above all—that American intervention appears probable.

I still do not have anywhere in the house where I can shave. Reading aloud is an impossibility. Frau Voss comes into our bedroom. She asked me, "What does plutocracy really mean?" How many "comrades of the people" will know that?

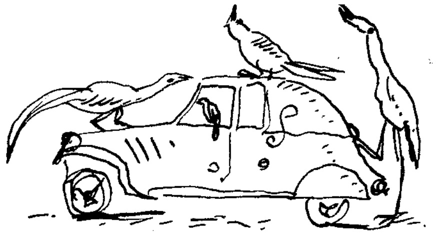
October 14th: House arrest from eight o'clock again. On top of that, bitterness over the imprisonment afterward led to an argument with Eva. One's nerves give way.

On the ninth, my birthday, I became aware not only of my age but also of my terrible isolation. Johannes Köhler, Fräulein Carlo, my former colleagues—where are they? "When all become unfaithful," one would need to be able to believe in a *bon Dieu*. Georg has been mysteriously silent since April, '39. My sister Grete is mentally ill. Only Sussmann wrote a nice letter. He wished me "freedom."

1941

February 12th: Early-spring weather since yesterday. Grateful for every additional minute of daylight, for each degree of warmth, for each yard of ground that can be walked (this last especially for Eva's sake). Eva has declined, lost weight, aged so very much—and yet, as my own body declines, I love her ever more ardently, *d'amour*, say the French.

We are usually extremely careful with regard to the blackout; on our evening walks we often grumble about illuminated windows, say the police should really do something. And now we ourselves are caught in the act. On Monday, all kinds of things came together which made me lose the thread. The whole house had been inspected by the Gestapo. It grew late. At the Monopol Restaurant the food was so bad that Eva didn't eat it. I wanted to get her something else at the station. Nothing there, either. So I was very out of humor and distracted when we returned, and immediately hurried into the kitchen to make tea. Once the light has been switched on, it is impossible to tell whether the shutters have been closed. When the policeman rang the doorbell at nine, we were quite unsuspecting; we led him to the window, so that he could see for himself that it was blacked out. The man was courteous and sympathetic; he had to charge me, because neighbors had reported the light. I had to state income and property. Afterward, the chief of police would determine the level of the penalty.



June 9th: For a whole hour today very dispirited with all my old doubts. I asked myself again: Shall I expedite our emigration by sending in a new affidavit and adding, "Passage can be guaranteed to me by telegram"? (It is supposed to help.) Long painful consultation with Eva. She said that over there she would have no hope of ever again finding a life of her own. Here at least she still retained some hope. It wounds me so much to hear Eva say that "for many years she has had nothing from life." Our mutual bond alone has not been enough to give her fulfillment.

Cell 89, June 23rd-July 1st: Weeks passed after our failure to black out and I was already beginning to think that the friendly policeman had not brought a charge after all. Then, on March 13th, it came: not a fine, but eight days in prison, for which I had to report within two weeks, unless I petitioned for a judicial decision. I therefore submitted a petition. My petition was rejected. I felt very bitter, for I undoubtedly owed it solely to the "J" on my identity card. But I resolved to face the whole thing philosophically.

Since, on my last free Sunday, the outbreak of war with Russia had mightily raised my spirits, I left the house on Monday, after a late breakfast and a heartfelt leave-taking, in a very reasonable state of mind. At the police headquarters, I went down three flights of stairs to a large iron door with the inscription "Police Cells." I was standing in a cloakroom in front of a young policeman.

"Undo your tie, unbutton your suspenders. Faster. In the time it takes you to remove your tie, I'd be completely undressed."

"How shall I hold up my trousers?"

"With your hands. Nightshirt and toothbrush you can keep, books and spectacles stay here."

Upstairs, one of the dark doors was opened; behind me the double sound of the key turned in the lock and of a heavy latch bar falling into place. At that second the eight days turned into a hundred and ninety-two hours, empty caged hours. In translations of American novels, one usually finds the word "Stop" spelled out between each sentence of a telegram. Similarly, whether I liked it or not, slow-moving time inserted itself between all my thoughts throughout this period: another hundred and eighty-five hours, another hundred and eighty-four, another hundred and eighty-three. But to be quite precise: this "Stop" sign only began at hour one eighty-six, because only then did I find a way of buttoning my trousers so that they stayed on my hips—until then it was not "Stop" but "My trousers are slipping, my trousers are slipping." What good is philosophizing about the inviolability of one's inner moral dignity? I experienced the misery of my trousers falling down as the most extreme humiliation.

Then my cell was opened: "You, go over there!" I was measured, my teeth examined, impressions taken of all ten fingers and of both hands. To the question about religion, I replied, "Protestant."

Surprised look: "But your identity card?"

"By law, by descent." Silence, greater politeness than before. I returned to my cell in better heart.

By Thursday, I felt only a horrible exhaustion. My beard, unshaved since Monday, chafed and itched. I had been able to see my face a little in the water of the washbasin—truly a convict. I, the professor, the senator, the state commissioner, with an entry in the Brockhaus Encyclopedia. One's self-esteem cannot be injured from outside? Talk! I could feel how injured it was, after all.

The cell door was opened at an unusual time, immediately after the midday meal. Outside, my wife was standing beside a white-bearded clerk. She looked very refined, with the unaffectedly proud bearing that she never loses. I should have been glad. Instead I was only dismayed. Why did she need to see me in this ignominy? "Why have you come here?" I asked as I approached her. "I cannot help you in any way, I am quite helpless," and, more softly, "Completely helpless, my glasses have been taken away."

My wife was calm. She said, "It's about the renewal of the food-ration cards. The Jewish Community will not hand them out for the two of us until yours are presented." Only in my cell did all the things I should have said to her occur to me. But I only said again and again that I was helpless and the Community had no right to hold back her cards and I was not pleased to see her here and she would have to take care of everything herself until Tuesday. She listened to me with a calm face, but I could see that her arm was trembling. Then I felt sick at my lack of control, sick and afraid. "Until Tuesday, then," I said. "Take care." I kissed her glove and ran back into the cell.

"I'm less a role model than a cautionary tale."

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Tuesday arrived at last. I awoke with a feeling of fear, which I could not laugh away and which only continued growing. What if they don't release me . . . or if I am placed in the hands of the Gestapo? With my "J" card I came under the jurisdiction of a special department. This fear could not be laughed or argued away. Then at last the latch was raised again, the lock turned back: "Take your things with you, go downstairs." I stepped onto the street, the sun was shining. My wife was waiting on the other side. A couple of days of feeling completely happy. In the Jews' House I allowed myself to be fêted a little as a kind of martyr—I needed it, I had become a little haggard, and my nerves were not quite right. Yet how can what I experienced be compared with what is experienced by thousands upon thousands in German prisons today?

July 21st: Frau Katz said recently, "Every Jew has his Aryan angel." This afternoon at Paschky's. Tins of sardines are being given out for food coupons. "Your card, Professor." "That section has been cut off." The man stiffens, mutters softly, "But that's . . . ," goes over to the fish counter and cuts me a piece of the extremely scarce and rare stock. At Vogel's I got a loaf without coupons. But Fräulein Zwiener refused me tobacco. "Only to established customers, to those who have been 'registered.'" The usual joys and sorrows of shopping.

September 15th: The Jewish Star of David comes into force on the nineteenth. At the same time a prohibition on leaving the environs of the city. I am shattered, cannot compose myself. Eva, now firmly on her feet, wants to take over all the errands from me. I want to leave the house only when it's dark, and then only for a few minutes. The newspapers' justification: After the Army had got to know, through Bolshevism, the cruelty, etc. of *the* Jew, all possibility of camouflage must be removed from the Jews here.

SEPTEMBER 18TH: Today we were outside together in daylight for the last time. First a cigarette hunt, then on the tram to Loschwitz over the suspension bridge, from there along the right bank down by the river toward town as far as the Waldschlösschen. In twenty-one years we had never taken this route. The Elbe very high, broad, flowing strongly and quietly, a lot of mist, the park gardens behind the high walls autumnal with flowers and falling leaves. A first chestnut fell and burst at our feet. It was like a last day out, a last little bit of freedom before a long (how long?) imprisonment.

NOVEMBER 1ST: Was for the first time subjected to some abuse the day before yesterday. At Chemnitzer Platz, a squad of Hitler Youth cubs. "A yid, a yid!" Yelling, they ran toward the dairy I was just entering. I could still hear them shouting and laughing outside. When I came out, they were lined up. I looked calmly at their commander; not a word was spoken. Once I was past, behind me, but not called out loudly, one, two voices: "A yid!"

Today an urgent warning card from Sussmann. He must have read something alarming about the deportations. I should immediately renew my U.S.A. application; he himself would see to it that I got an interim residence permit in Sweden, "if all conditions for the U.S.A. were fulfilled." I wrote back immediately: every route was now blocked. In fact we heard from several sources that a complete ban on emigration has just been decreed from the German side.

NOVEMBER 28TH: Every day news from many cities, departure of large transports, postponements, then departures again, with sixty-year-olds, without sixty-year-olds—everything seems arbitrary. Munich, Berlin, Hanover, Rhineland . . . the Army needs the trains, the Army has released trains. . . . Everyone wavers, waits from day to day. Today an urgent communication from the National Association: Who has war decorations? Will that be of any use against deportation?

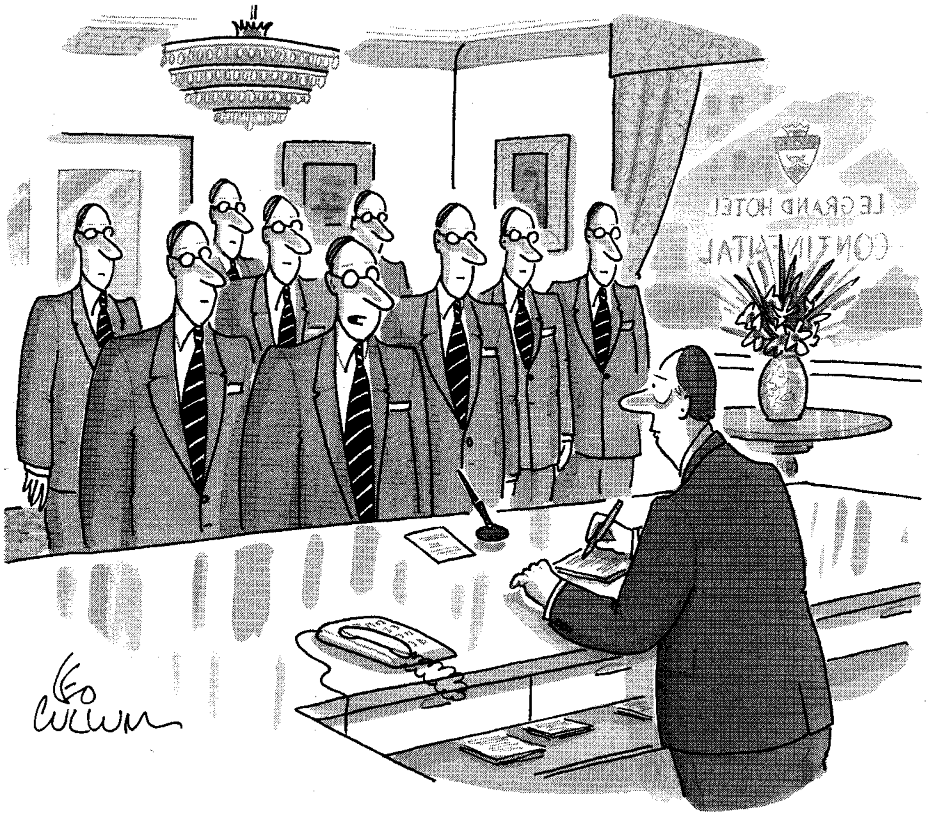
DECEMBER 12TH: Yesterday Germany declared war on the U.S.A. At quarter to four I was at the grocer's. The shop empty, the owner fumbling around with something, the wireless on in the back. I hear Hitler's voice, without being able to understand it. I: "Has war been declared on the U.S.A.?" The shopkeeper, quite indifferent: "I don't know, I'm busy here." In 1918, in just the same way, the racing results were hung over telegrams of the progress of the offensive.

DECEMBER 31ST: We celebrated New Year's Eve downstairs with the Kreidls. Tea with cakes—then vermouth and a real punch bowl. I made a serious little speech, so serious that when we toasted one another my hand was trembling. That it was our most dreadful year, dreadful because of our own real experience, more dreadful because of the constant state of threat, most dreadful of all because of what we saw others suffering (deportations, murder), but that at the end it brought optimism. My *adhortatio* was "Head held high for the difficult last five minutes!"

1942

FEBRUARY 13TH: At six o'clock a messenger came from the Jewish Community: I had to report at eight o'clock tomorrow morning, in Räcknitz, to shovel snow. That is exactly the work that makes my heart protest after five minutes. It is to last until the early afternoon. I also lack boots with good soles.

FEBRUARY 15TH: Yesterday, in the gray of dawn, almost darkness. Snow-covered streets unrecognizable. A pitiful group assembled in the house entry. Of the twelve men several were over seventy; I at sixty was literally the youngest. We shouldered shovels and other tools and first marched to the Little Toll House. There a delivery van was struggling at the entrance to the Südhöhe road. We got it free, widened the roadway. When throwing the snow up was too much of a strain, I lugged the full shovel to the free side of the road and let the contents roll down the slope. It



"Is that the corporate rate?"

was blowing terribly—at times there was heavy snowfall. But I held out remarkably well. We worked at a moderate pace; we stood around a lot and chatted.

March 16th: At midday on Friday, relatives bring underwear for the prisoners in the police cells. As long as the underwear is accepted and exchanged for used underwear, then the man is at least still there. If the underwear is refused, then he has been transported to a concentration camp. Elsa Kreidl comes home almost consoled: her husband is still inside. (For months now—no one knows why.)

The food shortage gets worse and worse. I nibble whatever the better-supplied Kätchen Sara Voss leaves lying open or partly eaten. A spoonful of honey, a little piece of sugar or bread. Yesterday a thick, already cut sausage was lying on the table. I sliced off a minute scrap. Soon afterward I heard Eva chasing Muschel [the cat] out of the kitchen: he, too, had wanted to steal some sausage.

March 25th: Ernst Kreidl has been taken to a concentration camp. The women here in the house keep silent about it.

May 15th: Jews with the star and anyone who lives with them are, effective immediately, forbidden to keep pets; they are also forbidden to give the animals away to be looked after. This is the death sentence for Muschel, whom we have had for more than eleven years and to whom Eva is very attached. What a vile, mean, cruel act against a few Jews. So often we have said to each other, "The tomcat's tail is our flag, we'll keep our heads above water, and at the victory celebrations Muschel will get a schnitzel from Kamm" (the fanciest butcher here). It makes me almost superstitious that the flag is being lowered now. Recently the animal has been particularly lively and youthful.

May 23rd: Yesterday morning the news of the death of Ernst Kreidl, and in the afternoon the long-expected house search. I came back at half past seven. A raid squad had appeared here at five and departed shortly before my return. I found Eva in our rooms. She was completely calm. Everything had followed the familiar pattern.

"You're Aryan?"

"You Jew's whore, why did you marry the Jew?"

She was sent downstairs, where she got a couple of slaps—stage slaps rather than anything serious, she said, whereas Ida Kreidl, for her part, complained of ringing in her ears. But they repeatedly spat in Eva's face and on her head. In our apartment I found that same chaos, that bestial devastation by cruel, drunken apes, which I had often heard described but the reality of which was nevertheless monstrous. Contents of cupboards, drawers, shelves, the desk all over the floor. Torn playing cards, powder, pieces of sugar, individual pills, contents of a sewing box strewn among them and stamped on: needles, buttons, shards of smashed Christmas decorations, pastilles, tablets, cigarette papers, Eva's clothes, clean underwear, hats, shreds of paper—inextricable. It is impossible to ascertain what has been stolen, what destroyed, what arbitrarily hidden, what overlooked. Every bit of food that was bought on ration coupons has been taken: butter, bacon, sugar (insofar as it is not ground into the carpet). My Service Cross is missing.

May 27th: This afternoon Eva is going to Pirna to fetch some money. I shall give her the diary pages of the last few weeks to take with her. After the house search I found several books, which had been taken off the shelf, lying on the desk. If one of them had been the Greek dictionary, if the manuscript pages had fallen out and had thus aroused suspicion, it would undoubtedly have meant my death. One is murdered for lesser misdemeanors. So these parts will go today. But I shall go on writing. That is *my* heroism. I want to give evidence, precise evidence!

August 19th: *Les faits nouveaux:* Ida Kreidl, Frau Pick, Frau Kronheim are to be included in the new transport to Theresienstadt.

August 20th: Frau Pick attempted suicide a second time, and this time successfully. Veronal. Fear of ill-treatment by the Gestapo during the transport, perhaps also fear of unknown Theresienstadt. In recent days she was excessively lively; in the evenings she hardly allowed anyone else to get a word in, frequently said, "One has to think beyond it, talk beyond it." The fact that she was giving away keepsakes—her husband's moonstone dress-shirt buttons to her niece Gaehde, a little black outdoor jacket to Eva—did not attract any notice, because of the evacuation. We had known Frau Pick since February. She was, in the best sense of the word, a great lady. She neither showed nor acted her seventy-eight years.

Substitutes are arranged in advance for every transport: the Gestapo assumes that a number of suicides will occur. German organization.

1943

January 17th: When I walk home along Fiedlerstrasse, I pass a large school. Often the schoolboys are pouring out, and then I always have the same experience: the older boys walk past me and are well-behaved, the little ones, on the other hand, laugh, shout "Jew" and so on at me. So it has been drummed into the little ones—it no longer works on the older ones. Eva says she notices how unhealthy the schoolchildren look. By contrast the very little ones and the infants are blooming. Children's food and, above all, milk with cream is provided only up to the age of six.

February 28th: Since yesterday, literally everyone not in mixed marriages is now in the camp. Only Hirschel and Kahlenberg have been left behind, and only so that they can wind things up. We shall not see the rest again. Frau Voss, the Seliksohns, the Reichenbachs, Frau Ziegler—I count them all among the dead. How long will they let us live here? And how shall we live? I intend to force myself to work until the last moment. Recently in a restaurant Eva heard a woman saying that her son had sent a card from the Eastern Front; on it was only, "I'm still alive, I'm still alive, I'm still alive!" Those are my feelings too; depending on my mood from hour to hour, the emphasis switches between "alive" and "still."

APRIL 18TH: Yesterday with the morning post the order to report for labor service on Monday, April 19th. I had to go to the Community, where I was told: the Willy Schlüter Company, 30C Wormser Strasse. Working hours from 2 P.M. to 10 P.M. daily; it would be very light work, weighing and packing tea. I'm not bothered about light or heavy, only about the irretrievable loss of time and the deadly monotony of these eight hours.

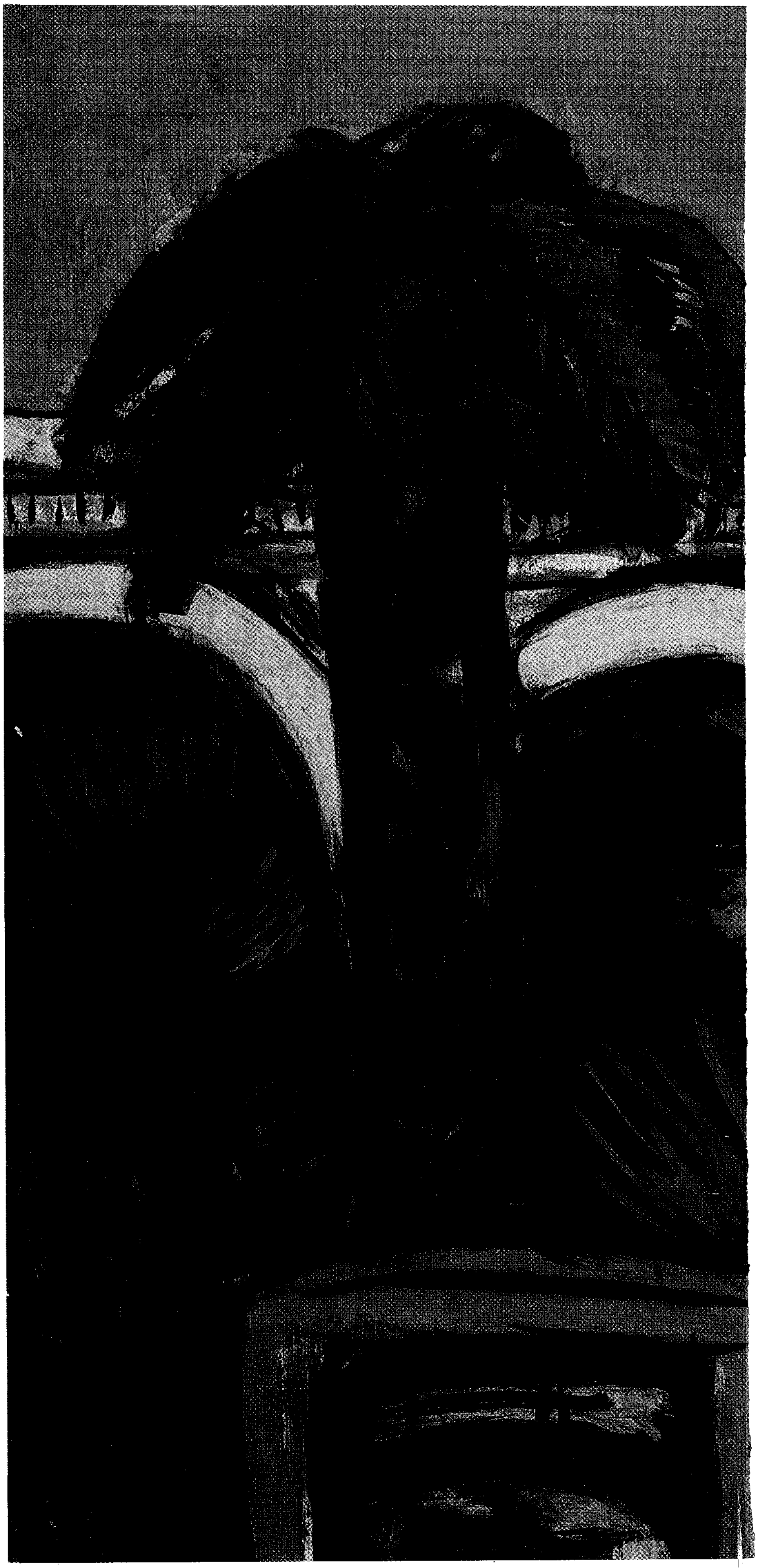
MAY 5TH: At four, we were sitting down for coffee, when the foreman appeared: "You had better put the coffee away—there's an inspection!" Two officers walked through the room. One said: "You're all asleep—it has to be done faster." With that they disappeared. Once this had passed—with the tremendous danger it involved—we heaved a sigh of relief and turned on the radio. Aside from music and the war bulletin—the Germans are on the retreat in Tunisia, and so hope rises again—nothing but quite extravagant incessantly repeated Jew-baiting.

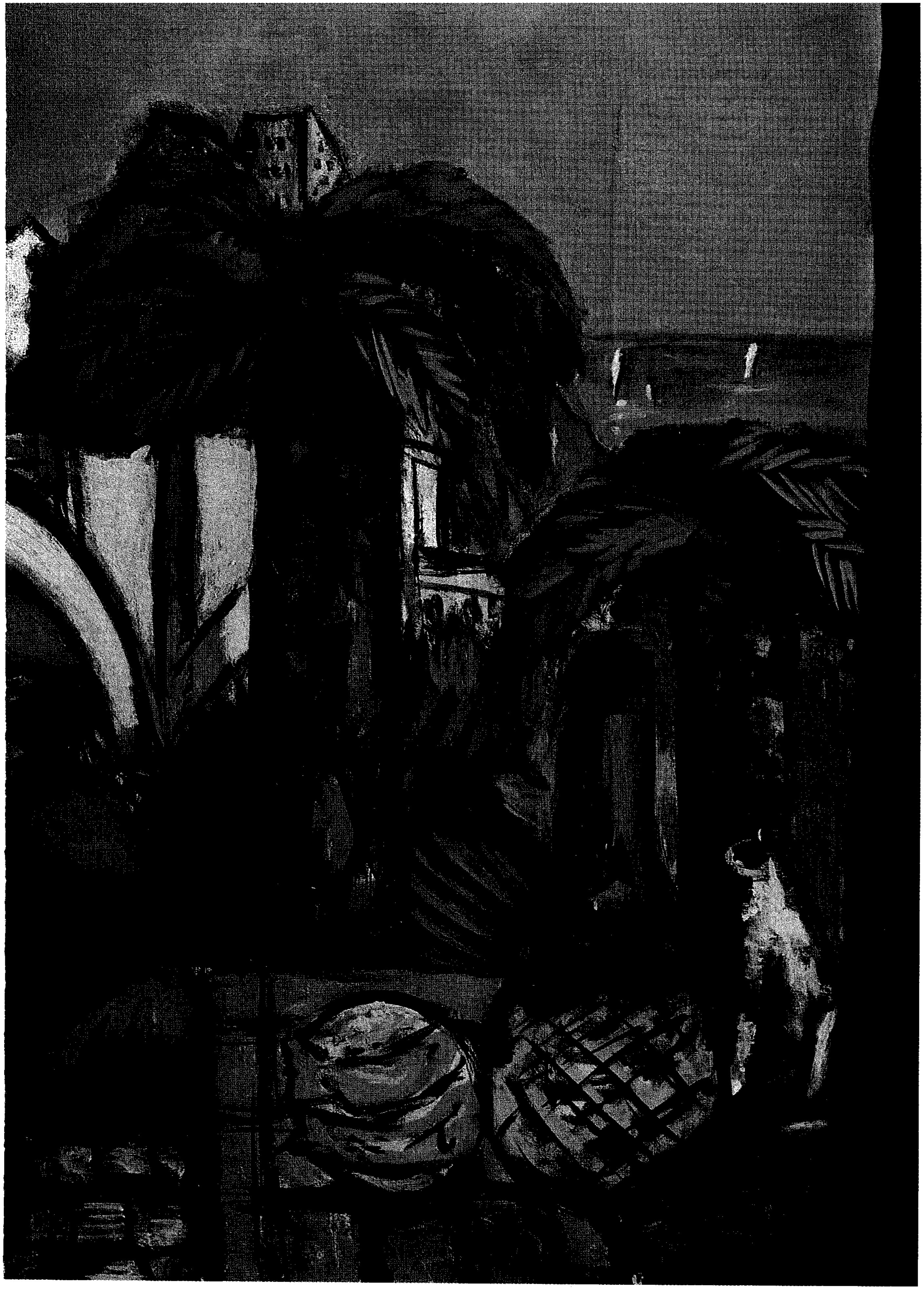
At work they say, "However the war ends, the Jews will never be at ease here—anti-Semitism goes too deep."

I: "It has overreached itself. It has

RESPITE

Everyone needs a holiday, and the great German Expressionist Max Beckmann (1884-1950) was no exception. Throughout most of his career, his aesthetic mood was in jangled tune with the revolution and reaction of German culture between the wars; his fame rests on densely packed allegorical pictures—tangles of limbs and stricken faces—and on self-portraits, in particular one of the artist in black tie, smoking a cigarette. But, like so many painters of his era, Beckmann turned near the end of his life to the easy pleasures of the South of France. "Beaulieu" (1947), at right, will be included in "Impressions of the Riviera," on view at the Portland (Maine) Museum of Art from June 25th through October 18th. More examples of the artist's sunny side will be shown at the Hamburger Kunsthalle beginning August 7th.





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unmasked itself. It will have bankrupted itself."

How deep does anti-Semitism go in the population? I am carrying a heavy tea chest. An Aryan worker to me: "You shouldn't be doing that, let me!"

"It's really all right; I'm not that shaky yet."

"Come on, give it to me, you don't get enough meat."

JUNE 22ND: The Hirschels and the Kahlenbergs were taken to Theresienstadt yesterday.

1944

JANUARY 23RD: At last a letter from Sussmann. The first since October. One of his daughters has married an American bookkeeper. Georg is still alive. All his sons have children—those in the U.S.A. all with American wives. I thought about our family's fate and the fate of our blood. Father came from the Prague ghetto. His sons were important men in Germany. His grandsons are in England, America, and Sweden. His great-grandsons have Swedish and American blood and will know nothing about him.

APRIL 8TH: Conversation with Stühler, Sr., about my diaries: "I shall bear witness."

"The things you write down, everybody knows; and the big things, Kiev, Minsk, etc., you don't know anything about."

"It's not the big things that are important, but the everyday life of tyranny, which gets forgotten. A thousand mosquito bites are worse than a blow to the head. I observe, note down the mosquito bites."

Stühler, a little later: "I once read that fear of something is worse than the event itself. How I dreaded the house search. And when the Gestapo came I was quite cold and defiant. And how our food tasted afterward! All the good things, which we had hidden and which they had not found."

"You see, I'm going to note that down!"

MAY 6TH: Yesterday a death sentence: a muscle in my left eye is paralyzed. How much work will I manage with one eye? Diabetes probably the cause—hence the terrible thirst recently. Circumstances: my first stroke, a very minor one, but a stroke nevertheless. What will the second stroke make of me? A heap of imbecility in a shitty bed like Grete, like Father? Shall I disgust Eva and be a burden to her? But I do not have any Veronal, I have no courage, and I must try to survive the Third Reich, so that Eva's widow's pension is assured.

JUNE 6TH: Eva brought the news that the invasion has begun tonight (from the fifth to the sixth of June) near Cherbourg. Eva was very excited; her knees were trembling. I myself remained quite cold; I am no longer or not yet able to hope.

AUGUST 20TH: On the way home Werner Lang told me that a soldier had addressed him on the platform of the tram: "You're still here. Why is that?" (without any aggression in his voice).

"Because I am in a mixed marriage."

"Well, that's decent; but I've seen such awful things in Poland, such awful things! They will have to be paid for!" This very loudly, while other people were listening. The man was risking his head.

SEPTEMBER 1ST: Five whole years of war! I do not believe I have ever noted this: at every door of the apartment, fixed at an angle and at eye level, there is a mezuzah. Lewinsky says the rabbi lived here. Recently he opened one of the little rolls and showed us the splendid, regular, but minute handwritten verses from the Bible.

1945

FEBRUARY 9TH: Yesterday, Frau Stühler divulged a curious fact: Order relayed to Aryan houses not to give begging soldiers bread, still less a bed, and to chase away any who were persistent. (Schwarz said that in Dresden alone patrols were said to have arrested about seven hundred deserters.)

FEBRUARY 13TH: Yesterday afternoon Neumark had me called over to the Jewish Community; I had to help him deliver letters this morning. I was quite unsuspecting. Then he told me what they were: all those capable of working were being evacuated. I remain here.

"So the end is more likely for me," I said.

"On the contrary, staying here is a privilege."

I went upstairs to the Eisenmanns, the whole family assembled—extremely upset. Waldmann developed the blackest assumptions with great certainty: "Those of us who remain behind, we have perhaps a week, no more. Then we'll be fetched from our beds at six o'clock in the morning. And we'll end up just like the others. You'll see."

FEBRUARY 22ND-24TH: We sat down for coffee at about half past nine on Tuesday evening, February 13th, very tired and depressed. I had spent the day running around, bringing bad news. Then came full-scale warning. Soon we heard the humming of squadrons approaching, ever deeper, ever louder. The light went out, and there was an explosion nearby.... Then nothing—a pause. We caught our breath and knelt with our heads down between the chairs. Then there was the sound of aircraft approaching again—deadly danger—and another explosion. I don't know how many times this happened. More explosions, but none in the courtyard. Then it became quiet, and then came the all-clear. A terrible strong wind was blowing. We placed a candle on the table, drank a little cold coffee and ate a little. We then groped our way over the broken glass and lay down in bed. It was after midnight. I thought, Just sleep, we're alive, now we'll have peace and quiet! After a while—it must have been after one o'clock—Eva said, "Air-raid warning." We hurried downstairs. Eva was two steps ahead of me. Suddenly there was a big explosion nearby. I knelt, pressing myself against the wall close to the courtyard door. When I looked around, Eva had disappeared.

I ran across the yard to the Jews' cellar. The door was wide open. A group of people cowered, whimpering, to the right of the door; I knelt by the window. I called out to Eva. Several times. No reply. Then there was an explosion right in front of the window close to me. Something hard and glowing-hot struck the right side of my face. I put my hand up and it was covered with blood. I felt for my eye; it was still there. A group of Russians—where had they come from?—were pushing to get out. I started after them. I had a backpack, the gray bag with our manuscripts, and Eva's jewelery in my hand. I stumbled and fell. A Russian pulled me up, then ran off in another direction, and I followed. I thought nothing. I wasn't even afraid—just incredibly exhausted. I think I was expecting the end.

Someone called out, "This way, Herr Klemperer!" And in the demolished little lavatory building next to me I saw Eisenmann, Sr., with little Georg in his arms. "I don't know where my wife and the other children are," he said. "But it's getting too hot here—the wooden frame is burning. Over there, the Reich Bank Building!" We ran into a hall which was surrounded by flames but looked solid. The bombs seemed to have stopped, but everything around us was on fire. Then Eisenmann said, "We must get down to the Elbe." He ran down the slope with the child on his shoulders, but after five steps I was out of breath and unable to follow.

Buildings were burning to the right and left—the Belvedere and the Art School. The roof of the Finance Ministry was glowing white. Slowly my thoughts came to me. Was Eva lost? Had she been able to save herself? Had I thought too little about her? I had no sense of time—it went on forever and then didn't go on long at all. Then dawn, and in the half-light I saw all the people on the road by the Elbe. At around seven o'clock, I walked up to the shell of the Belvedere, which was still burning, and came to a terrace wall. A row of people were sitting there, and one of them called out to me: it was Eva, sitting unharmed on her suitcase in her fur coat. At the critical moment, someone had pulled her out of the entrance hall and into the Aryan cellar. She had climbed to the street through the window, had been in the cellar of the Albertinum for a while, then found the Elbe through the smoke, and had spent the rest of the night looking for me. Once, as she was searching, she had wanted to light a cigarette and had no matches; there was something glowing on the ground and she bent down to use it—it was a burning corpse. Eva was holding up much better than I was. She had observed things more calmly, and she had kept control of herself, even though pieces of wood from a window had fallen on her head.

Eva ripped the star from my coat with a pocketknife and we started slowly along the riverbank. I was carrying both of our bags, and my limbs hurt. Above us, house after house was a burned-out ruin. Masses of the empty, rectangular cases of the stick incendiary bombs stuck out of the churned-up earth. The dead—small, nothing more than a bundle of clothes—were scattered across our path. The skull had been torn away from one corpse, and its head was a dark-red bowl. Once we saw an arm, with a pale, quite fine hand, like a model made of wax, such as one sees in the window of a hairdresser's. We turned right toward the town. I let Eva lead the way.

There was no damage to the solid range of cellars of the Albertinum. It was difficult to find a seat on the benches. Soldiers and ambulance men came and went; new stretchers were brought in. Eva lay down and slept for a long time. It was no more than four o'clock, yet it felt as if it were already late on the second night. My exhaustion was made worse by hunger. Later a woman came by, broke off a piece of bread with her surely dirty hand, and gave it to me. I ate it. There were said to be many dead lying in the courtyard. I did not see them.

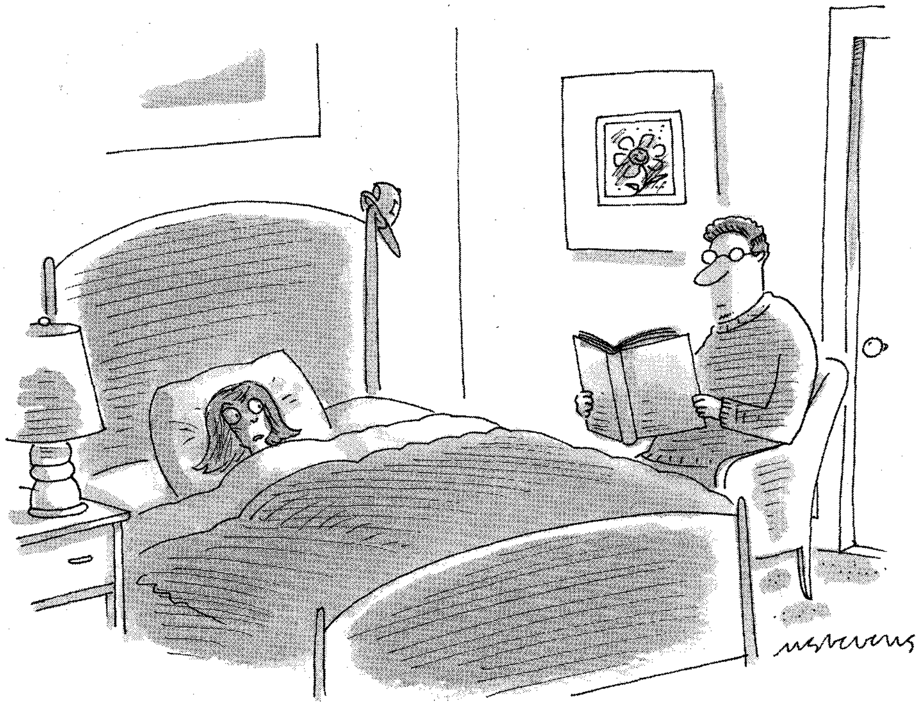
Very late that night or early the next morning, Witkowsky came excitedly toward me. "We are all being taken out of here to Meissen, to Klotzsche." But the truck was full. There would be others, we were told. Dawn broke. Then a truck was ready again; several of the wounded were loaded on and we, the healthy, were pushed in between them. There was a bumpy drive past ruins and fires. Early Thursday morning we arrived at the airbase.

The first delight was the huge pot of noodle soup in the dormitory. I ate three big bowls. At lunch we learned that all civilians would be evacuated on Sunday. Those whose homes had been bombed would be taken to places in the area, like Coswig and Meissen.

APRIL 2ND: Our plan is this: we will travel as the "Kleinpeters" from Dresden, where our home was supposedly bombed. I realize that carrying out the plan that Eva has devised depends on her. She must always be the one who acts and speaks—my own presence of mind or courage is not enough; alone I would surely be lost. I am altogether aware to what extent she is putting her life at risk in order to save mine.

On June 10th, after weeks of hiding under assumed identities in the Bavarian countryside, the Klemperers returned to Dölzschen, where they discovered that their house was still standing. ♦

(Translated, from the German, by Martin Chalmers.)



"Skip the funny voices tonight—O.K., Dad?"

ANNALS OF COOKING

BAD BOY IN THE KITCHEN

How did Marco Pierre White become the most celebrated British chef?

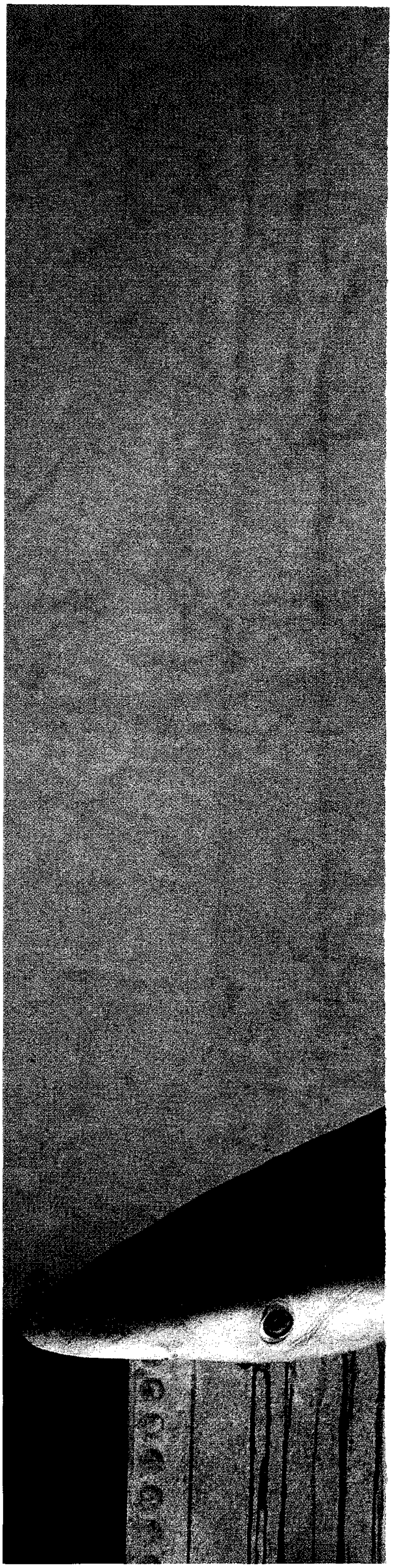
BY LUKE JENNINGS

IN February of 1978, at Allerton High School, in Leeds, in the northern English county of Yorkshire, a tall sixteen-year-old boy named Marco Pierre White faced his careers officer across a desk. White had grown up in public housing on the edge of the city with an alcoholic father and three brothers; he was dyslexic, and his classroom record was poor. He was not without skills, however, for he was an expert poacher. His hunting ground was the nearby estate of the Earl of Harewood, where, by night, he would catch trout and shoot roosting pheasants. What he really wanted, he explained, was to be a gamekeeper. The careers officer listened to him patiently. "Have you thought about catering?" she asked.

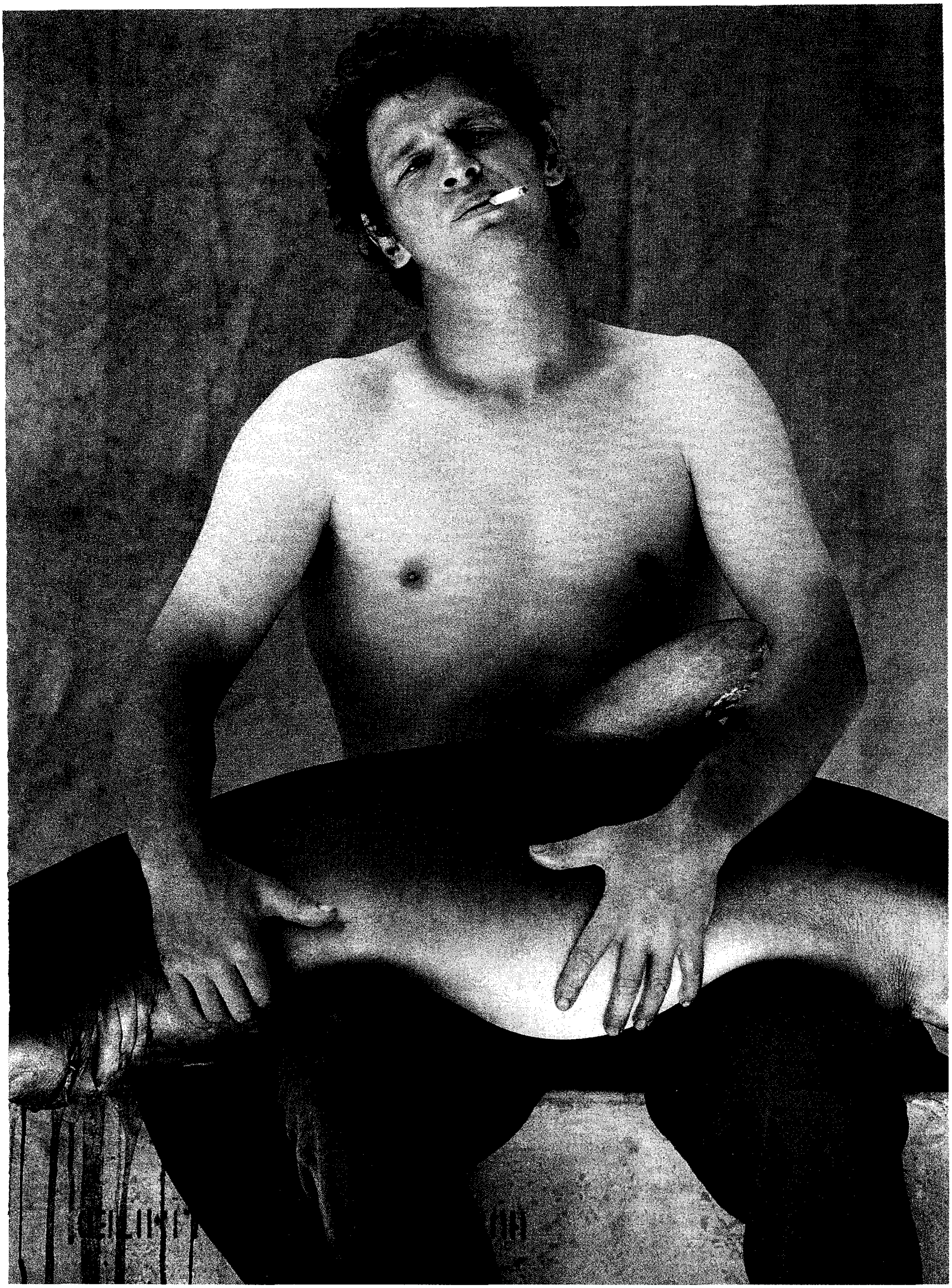
Two decades after that interview, Marco Pierre White is regarded as the greatest practitioner of haute cuisine that Britain has ever produced. He has six West End restaurants to his name, and he is a major stakeholder in a company that, if floated on the London Stock Exchange, as it may be next year, could be valued at a hundred million pounds or more. This month, he relaunches the Mirabelle, the Mayfair eatery once frequented by Princess Margaret, John Paul Getty, and Aristotle Onassis, after spending five million pounds on the site. White's twenty-year journey from Leeds has been a tempestuous one, however, and his celebrity has been born as much of his extreme and antagonistic personal style as of his achievements in the kitchen.

The name Marco Pierre White was first brought to the attention of the metropolitan beau monde in January of 1987, when Harvey's opened on Wandsworth Common, South London. It sounded unpropitious; the restaurant had formerly been a rather drab wine bar, and Wandsworth was on the unglamorous south side of the Thames. But Harvey's was a sensation. The food was sublime, the prices were astronomical, and the patron was downright dangerous. Masters of haute cuisine were supposed to be gravely fastidious Europeans of a certain age, not wild-eyed, chain-smoking twenty-five-year-old Yorkshiremen. They were supposed to remain closeted in their kitchens, and not prowl their restaurants looking for trouble. White, though, wasn't interested in how things were supposed to be.

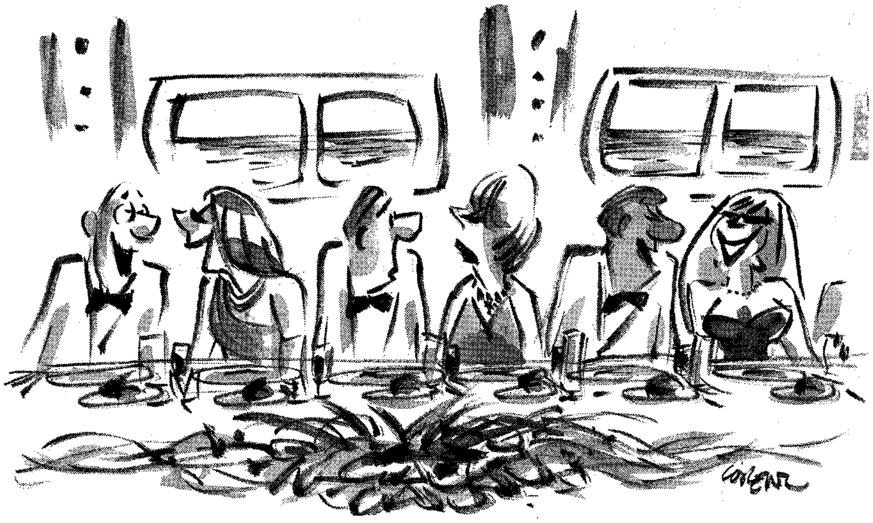
In 1978, he had started as an apprentice cook at the Hotel St. George, in Harrogate, fifteen miles north of Leeds, and had moved on a year later to the Box Tree, at Ilkley, then the best restaurant in northern England. At the Box Tree, his ambitions awakened, White determined to excel at the métier that had been so casually proposed to him. The proprietors were Colin Long and Malcolm Reid, known as "the boys," whom White remembers as "very camp and very funny. I'd be whisking eggs, and I'd hear one of them say, 'Ooh, Marco, that's a lovely wrist action! Why don't you come into the larder and earn yourself some cigarettes?' " At the Box Tree, White learned the basic elements of classic cuisine, and the importance of restrained luxuriousness. At nineteen, he left Yorkshire for London and the kitchens of Le Gavroche, whose chef-proprietor was the redoubtable Albert Roux. "I hired him for his personality," Roux says. "He had these deep, deep eyes, and he was very convincing." Amazed by his young charge's energy, and by the speed with which he assimilated instruction, Roux referred to him as "the little genius." After three years with Roux, White worked for, in turn, Nico Ladenis, at Chez Nico; Pierre Koffman, at La Tante Claire; and Raymond Blanc, at Le Manoir aux Quat'



Marco stories appeared almost weekly: he wa



he enfant terrible of cuisine, he was a gastro-punk lover of models, he was an egomaniacal tyrant. Photograph by Bob Carlos Clarke.



"I'm terribly sorry, but I forgot to bring my talking points."

• •

Saisons. These chefs, although none of them were British-born, represented the British haute-cuisine establishment of the early eighties. Like a spy, White submitted himself to the discipline of their kitchens, remembered everything that he heard and saw, and moved on. His employers, he knew, would soon be his rivals, and he was determined to surpass them.

When White went into business on his own, he offered a startling and sensual menu drawn from the far extremes of the classical French repertoire. Pigeon de Bresse, for example, was stuffed with foie gras and truffles and served *en vessie* (in a pig's bladder), while noisette of lamb was presented *en crépinette* (in the filigree caul that enclosed its intestines). The London *Times* restaurant critic Jonathan Meades visited Harvey's in its very early days. "I had brains *en gelée*, followed by rabbit in langoustine sauce," he told me, "and it was like the first time I read a sentence by Nabokov. I knew that this was it—the works." For A. A. Gill, the restaurant critic of the *Sunday Times,* White's cooking was "passionate, like receiving a love letter." Gill had arrived at Harvey's for lunch at midday, dressed in a morning suit and intending to be at a wedding by 3 P.M., but he was still at his table eight hours later. "I remember Marco rushing out with a frying pan of puy lentils, caramelized onions, and foie gras, and pouring the whole lot onto my plate," he says. " 'What does it taste of?' he kept saying. 'What is it? What is it?' and I said that I didn't know. 'It's childhood,' he said. 'It's the taste of childhood.' "

DESPITE the almost maniacal detail he applied to his cooking, White expressed scant respect for most of his clientele. He once described them as "fat, ugly bastards," and although the remark was tongue in cheek, it was certainly the customers who were expected to match up to the chef's expectations, rather than he to theirs. Perceived impertinences—finger-snapping at waiters, for example, or the ordering of well-done steaks—were punished by expulsion. "It was ten months before I threw my first customer out," White recalls. "But I was like a serial killer: once I'd got the taste for it, I couldn't stop. I remember once I'd asked some people to leave the restaurant for being obnoxious, and a man at the next table—he looked like a judge, or something—said, 'No, please. I can vouch for them, they've done nothing.' 'Right,' I said. 'If that's your attitude, then you can fuck off, too.' On our best night, we chucked out fifty-four customers."

The chattering classes were mesmerized. The more outrageously White behaved, the harder they fought for bookings. Night after night, Rolls-Royces, Bentleys, and Porsches flattened the grass of Wandsworth Common, and Marco stories appeared in the press almost weekly. He was the enfant terrible of British cuisine, he was a gastro-punk lover of models and socialites, he was an egomaniacal tyrant. There was truth in all these stories: he seduced more than one of his female customers while her consort—who in one case was her husband—waited unknowing at the table, and the Harvey's kitchen was undoubtedly a hellhole for White's *brigade.*

The French word is appropriate, for haute-cuisine culture in the nineteen-eighties was a macho affair. The hours were long (eighteen hours a day, six days a week); the heat and the crowding were atrocious; and curses were dispensed liberally. "Marco's boys," as the Harvey's team was known, tended to come from working-class backgrounds like White's own. For them, the lure of the restaurant kitchen was the same as that of the boxing ring: it offered the talented an outside chance of becoming rich. White had done eight years' hard time under the most exacting culinary taskmasters in Britain, and he saw no reason not to give as good as he had got. "If you don't whip a horse, it won't win," he explained. He demanded unflagging excellence, and Harvey's became notorious in the trade as the "hardest" kitchen in London. For those who survived, however, promotion was swift. White was generous with his knowledge, and many of his former trainees are now important chef-proprietors in their own right: Philip Howard, of the Square; Jean-Christophe Novelli, of Maison Novelli; Gordon Ramsay, of Aubergine. "You put a lot in," Ramsay says, "but, shit, you got a lot out."

IN January of 1988, White was awarded his first Michelin star. For a twenty-six-year-old chef-proprietor to win a star within a year of opening his first restaurant was an exceptional achievement. The Michelin universe is a rarefied one, in which far more than the food is on trial. If the napkin-folding is less than exquisite or the cloakroom's aura is negative, the establishment in question will not be considered, and at first sight it appears curious that a high-rolling bad boy like White should have been observant of such priorities. The truth is that White's histrionics were no more than show-dressing. At heart, White, like all successful chefs (and, for that matter, all successful poachers), was, and is, meticulous. Aware at some level, however, that it was his outrageous self-presentation that kept him in the public eye, he usually furnished a suitably louche display for the media. When Fay Maschler, of the *Evening Standard*, gave him a critical mention, the story spread that she had done so because White would not go to bed with her; Maschler later refuted it in print. His usual tactics with female interviewers were first to appall them with his profanity, sexual suggestiveness, and apparent bullying of his staff, and then to feed them—often spooning inky little baby squid or flakes of *escabèche de rouget* into their mouths—and be forgiven everything. Eating was very important in London in those days. Boom time had become *grande bouffe.*

By the end of the nineteen-eighties, however, London was in full recession. Restaurants were closing all over town, and most of the ones that survived lowered their prices. In January of 1990, White was awarded his second Michelin star, and he calculatedly raised his prices. Harvey's continued to do good business, but the pressures were acute. White's appearance became so ravaged that a friend, the photographer Bob Carlos Clarke, suggested that he model for an anti-drugs advertisement. During that summer, White's blood pressure soared to 210 over 180, and he had acute panic attacks. It was feared that he had suffered a stroke, but the eventual diagnosis was one of high blood pressure caused by overwork and stress.

In August of that year, White's wife, Alex McArthur, whom he had married two years earlier, and who had borne him a daughter, Lettie, divorced him for "unreasonable behavior." He then moved in with Nicola Barthorpe, his wife's best friend (and a former schoolmate of the Princess of Wales), but shortly afterward Barthorpe ended the relationship, citing White's "obsession with cooking." The press subsequently announced White's engagement to a model named Susie Brookes, but he married another model, Lisa Butcher, whom he had encountered just six weeks before, outside the night club Tramp. "I gather there were a lot of women wearing black armbands when they heard we were going to be married," Butcher said archly, shortly before the wedding. The marriage, however, barely survived the ceremony: White was upset by Butcher's Bruce Oldfield bridal gown, which featured a plunging neckline and cutaway sides, and he was visibly nervous throughout. "When I was standing at the altar, I knew that I was making a terrible mistake," he told me. Fifteen weeks later, the couple separated, and were later divorced.

ONE especially busy evening, White answered the receptionist's telephone at Harvey's. The caller wanted a reservation for that night, and, when White explained to him that the restaurant was fully booked, he protested, "But I'm a hungry, fat, ugly bastard!" White, amused, found him a table. The diner was Steven Saltzman, the son of the film producer Harry Saltzman, and the two men became friends. When Saltzman discovered that White was considering opening a new restaurant in Chelsea Harbour, he introduced White to another friend of his, the actor Michael Caine, who became White's partner. The Canteen, a smart brasserie, opened in November of 1992 to considerable publicity. The first year's business went well, with pretax profits topping four hundred thousand pounds. But soon there were rumors of financial discord, the partnership imploded, and a court settlement was imposed which forbade either party ever to speak of the affair again. Michael Caine appears to have carried the injunction further, stating through his publicist that he "was not permitted to discuss Mr. White with any member of the press, in any context."

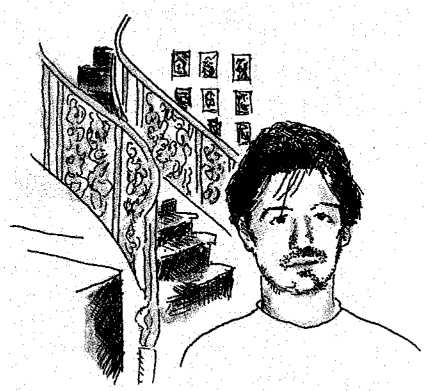
White admits that Caine did do him one supreme favor, which was to introduce him to Rocco Forte (now Sir Rocco Forte), then the chairman of Britain's largest hotel chain. Forte, in the early nineties, was faced by a seemingly intractable problem: his hotel dining rooms were losing money. The grandly formal halls had been all but deserted in favor of sexier, more intimate "houses," like Harvey's. It occurred to Forte that if he sublet his dining rooms to star-name chefs he just might win back a fashionable clientele. In consequence, he offered the Hyde Park Hotel dining room to White. For White, it was an extraordinary, unprecedented deal: he could have one of the most elegant premises in the West End for a modest rent, and keep all profits.

The Restaurant—Marco Pierre White, as the venture was portentously known, opened in September of 1993. As far as White was concerned, Wandsworth had been about playing the volatile rock-star chef; this was business. The food served at the Restaurant was classical French, very grand, very formal, and the menu bore the dates that White had perfected each dish (a detail that was rather too exquisite for some commentators). White had been buying early-twentieth-century art, and he filled the room with works from his own collection—paintings by Gertler, Berard, and Gluck, sculptures by Bugatti—and also with lilies. (The florists' bill for the Restaurant's first year exceeded a hundred thousand pounds.) There were no more expulsions, no more public dramas. And now there was also a home life. White had fallen in love with Matilda Conejero, a member of the Canteen's staff, and in December of 1993 she bore him a son, Luciano. (Eighteen months later, a second son, Marco, arrived.) Conejero, who smokes cigars, does not stand for any monkey business. "She's a strong woman," he told me. "She keeps me in line." The family now divides its time between an apartment in Knightsbridge and a house on the River Avon in Hampshire.

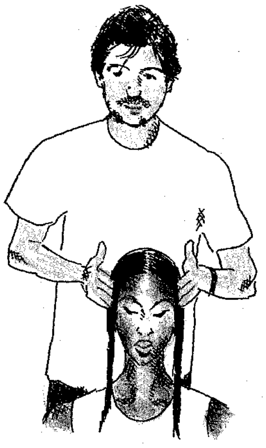
In January of 1995, White won his third Michelin star, the guide's highest rating. At thirty-three, he was the youngest chef, and the only Englishman, ever to be so honored. Forte, delighted with the Restaurant's success (upon White's arrival, he told me, the dining room's turnover quadrupled overnight), asked if the chef could work the same magic on the Criterion, a Victorian dining room in Piccadilly Circus, which hadn't made a profit in thirty-five years. He offered White forty-nine per cent of the restaurant (Forte owned the rest) for nothing. White, unsurprisingly, agreed. He restored the room's Orientalist paintings, seraglio-style drapery, and golden-mosaic ceiling; designed a sophisticated but affordable menu; and

SKETCHBOOK BY MICHAEL ROBERTS

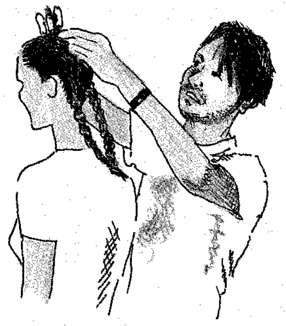
GUIDO'S EUROPEAN FEELING FOR HAIR



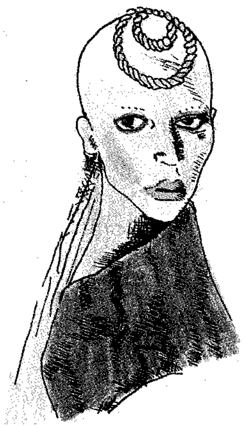
The hairdresser Guido Palau is the creative director for a London salon whose celebrity clients include the Duchess of York. "I'm just known as Guido," says Guido, who cuts and styles hair only for fashion shows and magazines. "I find when I'm cutting hair for a picture I can just keep going."



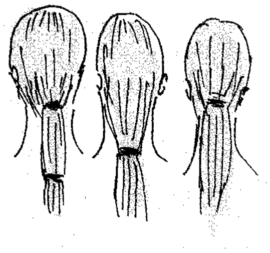
Guido is famous for his chopped look: cutting steps in people's hair. "Models like it. They don't want to look nice. They want it to be anti-beauty," he says.



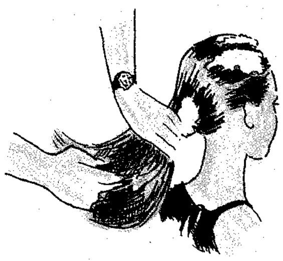
Backstage at Versus, Guido puts the models into tight braids but leaves tufts of hair sticking out. "I'm giving an anti-sweetness to the pigtails," he says.



For Alexander McQueen, Guido's "Joan of Arc" look involves braids, glue, and skin-colored skullcaps to give the illusion of baldness. "You're going for a result, and it doesn't matter how you get there."



Guido's simplest look for fall appears to be hair pulled back into rubber bands. He did it for the German designer Jil Sander, the French fashion house Louis Vuitton, and, eventually, New York's Calvin Klein.



Before Calvin Klein's show, Guido experiments with quantities of mousse in a model's hair. "I'm going for the look of a girl in Hampstead with fifteen cats who never washes her hair," he explains. Ultimately, this look doesn't make the show. "Europeans are more into conceptual hair," Guido says.

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reopened the Criterion in October. Today, the restaurant's annual gross turnover is more than six million pounds. White had money now: he bought two Mayfair restaurants, Les Saveurs and the Mirabelle, both on Curzon Street. These were judicious purchases; the Mirabelle's rent was a negligible thousand pounds a year, and its thirty-five-year lease is now valued at four million pounds. White revamped Les Saveurs and sold the venture to Rocco Forte at a profit. "He's a natural businessman," Forte notes.

WHITE has lately learned to find time to relax—specifically, to indulge a lifelong love of pike-fishing. He is fascinated by the pike, which he sees both as a predator like himself and as an embodiment of the female principle. ("Look at her," White said to me once, indicating a pike's streamlined form, baleful eye, and rapacious jaw. "Wouldn't you say that was a woman?") Like White, I have fished since childhood, and one day I telephoned him at the Restaurant to ask if he would like to go fishing with me. He was cautiously enthusiastic. As if to test my seriousness, he asked me a couple of hard-core questions about tackle and strategy, and then suggested an expedition to the River Kennet, in Berkshire. As we spoke, I could hear the din and clamor of a metropolitan restaurant; at intervals, our conversation was halted as dishes were submitted for White's inspection, interruptions that he invariably terminated with a quick "*Allez!* Fuck off!"

We met early the next morning. White won't drive—he considers himself too competitive to hold a license—so I took the wheel of his Land Rover. We talked about fishing we had done as children, and White spoke of his parents. Following the birth of his own children, he had been reconciled with his father, who was then dying of lung cancer. "I rang him in tears to tell him about my third Michelin star," White recalled, "but he didn't really understand why it was so important to me." His mother, who was Italian, had died of a brain hemorrhage when he was six, and thirty years later, he said, he was still mourning her. His signature dish at Harvey's, a tagliatelle of oysters and caviar laced with a champagne velouté, was dedicated to her memory.

When we arrived back at the Hyde Park Hotel after a second fishing trip, a staff member brought White several new hand-built Bruce and Walker Hexagraph rods that had been delivered in our absence. One by one, he unlaced the red-velvet cases and slid out the shining sections of rod, examining them minutely.

"How many of those rods have you got now, Marco?" one of the waiters asked.

"Fifty-five," White replied.

"All exactly the same?" the waiter asked.

"All exactly the same," White said.

The waiter persisted with his questions. "So why d'you go on buying them, then?"

White squinted along one of the rod sections, checking the alignment of the rings, and then returned it carefully to its case. "Because I can," he said.

IN November of 1995, a month after the opening of the Criterion, Granada, the media conglomerate, launched a hostile takeover bid against the Forte empire. In January, Rocco Forte was forced to capitulate, and White entered into negotiations with Charles Allen, Granada's chief executive. Granada's hospitality division was best known for the catering at its motorway rest stops, and it badly needed a touch of culinary glamour, whereas White, by then hell-bent on expansion, needed more properties. "Marco's boys" were men now, brilliant chefs and managers in their own right, and if White's organization could not accommodate them they would become his rivals. As the talks progressed, White launched two more restaurants. One, in East London, was a *brasserie* named MPW; the second was Quo Vadis, a long-established Italian restaurant in Soho. For Quo Vadis, White rented the personal art collection of Damien Hirst, another enfant terrible from Leeds, and the restaurant was designed around his installations. These included flayed cows' heads in tanks of formaldehyde, and there were noisy demonstrations by animal liberationists when the restaurant opened, on a cold night in January of 1997. Staff members were threatened, the police were called, and five arrests were made. Looking down at the demonstrators in the street below, White remembers, "I was thinking of sending the boys out with hot coffee for them. I couldn't have asked for better publicity."

The idea informing White's new restaurants—the Mirabelle, Quo Vadis, MPW, the Criterion—is affordable glamour. A meal at these restaurants runs, on average, to about forty pounds a head, even with wine—not cheap, but not prohibitive. Standards remain high; White inspires a certain awe in his staff, even at a distance. And London society has changed: the new diners out are not the pin-striped members of the expense-account set but the demotic-speaking meritocrats of fashion, sport, and the media. A Blairite cuisine has arisen, exemplified by the upscale but impeccably ethnic River Café in Fulham. (Style journalists now speak of a "River Café consciousness" to describe the suit-and-tie, all-bases-covered, but hey, *not boring* hipness of New Labour.) White, who once cooked dinner for Mick Jagger, Michael Caine, and John Major, is not an advocate of New Labour, but his repackaging of the Criterion and the Mirabelle for all comers while allowing the restaurants' bygone exclusivity to linger, almost ironically, in the details is unerringly "on-message."

COOKING may have made White a rich man, but he is still addicted to the theatre of his trade. Recently, he invited me to spend the evening with his team in the Oak Room kitchens at Le Meridien hotel, in Piccadilly. The hotel lobby, with its canned music and club-class ambience, gives no clue to the considered luxuries that lie beyond the Oak Room's mirrored doors. The hotel was a Granada property, and White moved there from the Restaurant last year. Since then, he has transformed the Oak Room—previously little more than a tourist dining room—into London's grandest and most expensive restaurant. The room's oppressive décor, with its giltwork and massive chandeliers, has been neutralized by art works from White's collection and, most particularly, by his Bugatti bronzes of jungle animals which, shining and muscular, pace eye-level plinths.

As the tables filled, the backstage tension built. Dishes are assembled in stages and dressed at a final inspection station known as the *passe*, from which they are delivered on trays to the customers. As both quality controller and working chef, White moves at speed between the *passe* and his workstation. That night, he was handling fish. He brought intense concentration to each brief act of cooking, laying the soft fillets of mullet and brill in the hissing cast-iron pans, finger tasting the *sabayon* and the *jus niçoise*, hurrying the vegetables around their skillets, and, finally, with all elements achieving critical perfection at the same moment, dressing the plates. Around him, as orders were bellowed from the *passe* ("One trotter, one *rouget*, one St. Pierre, *et vite!*"), others were duplicating White's choreography, though none quite managed his speed. The activity, at its loudest and most urgent, seemed to bring him a kind of peace.

One night soon after that visit, I returned to the Oak Room, this time to dine with the novelist Julian Barnes and his wife, the literary agent Pat Kavanagh. I recognized a model and one of London's more nubile heiresses, but for the most part the clientele evinced a dark-suited anonymity. Barnes chose two wines: a 1978 Riesling Clos St. Hune and a 1990 Beaucastel. "We always try and push people up to a hundred pounds a bottle," White announced cheerfully as he took our order. I can remember every detail of the meal, including the courses that White likes to throw in unannounced. Oysters *en gelée* with watercress, pale and viscous on the fork and of a single-note clarity on the tongue; *tête de porc*, meat of such strange and papaw softness that it seemed to deny the essence of meat; *bressole de pigeon* with fumet of truffles, the layers of savoy cabbage, foie gras, and bird breast parting beneath the knife to marble the plate with blood and butter before their final dissolution in the mouth; a pineapple caramelized with a vanilla-and-chili sauce and totemically spiked with vanilla pods.

The Oak Room is regarded by White as his couture line, and, as such, is freed from any requirement to be profitable. All is sacrificed to sensation, and I left the restaurant as I suspect many leave it: slowly, and in a state of almost post-coital bemusement. The check came to five hundred and eighty pounds, which by then seemed normal—sensible, even. White rang me the next morning. "We mugged you," he explained. "But we mugged you without violence." ♦

FICTION

WHO ARE YOU?

A roadside pickup.

BY DORIS DÖRRIE

On my twenty-fifth birthday I found a woman. I stopped at a deserted parking lot just off the Autobahn to have a pee, and saw her when I returned from the bushes. She sat slumped in a wheelchair, wrapped—despite the heat—in a heavy, dark coat, with a dark-red velvet hat on her head. I could not see her face. A fly was creeping over her hand. Cars were speeding past us. The air smelled of gasoline and rotten bananas. No one else for miles around.

I have never seen a dead person and don't want to. I am afraid of them, of their smell. Two years ago I was in the pathology department of the university hospital, in a room where they dissect bodies. There wasn't even a corpse present: we were filming a scene for a TV mystery. I was the production manager, and our corpse was a talkative actor. Red rubber gloves, hacksaws to cut open skulls, scales for organs, the basin for blood, the stainless steel—all that was bad enough, but what really upset me was the smell. The smell beneath the formalin. Nothing could mask it. The different perfumes of the women on our team and the pungent smoke from the director's cigarillo only made it more noticeable. Like poison gas, it penetrated my clothes, my skin, my heart. It shrank the life that lay before me to a tiny dot like fly shit on a windowpane.

For lunch we had Wiener schnitzel and potato salad on paper plates, served directly in front of the dissection-room door. I was astonished at how everyone tucked in, even the makeup artist, who only five minutes before had studied the knotted neck of a recently strangled man in order to reproduce true-to-life strangulation effects on our actor. No one seemed to smell what I smelled. In the evening, when I came home, I pressed myself tightly against my friend, Chris, but, for some reason, even he had that smell as well. Then, during the night, I was awakened by the smell; my own flesh seemed to stink of death and putrefaction.

The woman lifted her hand briefly and waved away the fly. That really did not simplify the situation. If she was alive, what was she doing here? I stepped toward her. Her eyes were closed, and she seemed to be asleep. I heard her snoring faintly. I touched her hand. It was ice-cold. I straightened, hoping to see another car, a family with a resolute mother and a bureaucrat father; they would know what to do with old women found in Autobahn parking lots.

I was too young to deal with old women, much too young. After all, it was my birthday. I was on my way to a party that Chris was giving me in one of his father's fields. He had insisted on the party; I would have liked best to stay alone in my small apartment.

I ran to my car and drove off. I didn't look at the old woman as I passed her. The Autobahn appeared to me like a glittering snake, a slithering long line of cars. Their drivers looked tired and disillusioned. They seemed to have been driving for ages.

Twenty-five years ago, this day was a Saturday. It was my mother on my new portable phone. It had been nearly ninety-five degrees in the shade.

Speak up, Mama. I can't hear you.

Ah, she whispered, I'm already speaking so loud.

Silence.

Vera, are you still there?

Yes.

When we took that taxi to the hospital to have you, my whole body stuck to the leather seats. That's how hot it was. I will never ever forget that feeling. It will be hot like that today. It's already more than seventy. I hate the heat. I've drawn the curtains. I'll stay indoors all day—yes, that's what I'll do. I won't do anything today. I will sit in the big chair and think of you. All day long. And I won't cook either. I was so happy when you were born. When the nurses brought you, I could hear you crying in the hallway. You cried louder than any of the other babies. I was so happy.

Silence.

Are you still there, Vera? Are you with a man? What's he doing? Am I disturbing you?

No, Mama.

She sighed. It will get terribly hot today. My legs are already very heavy. Here is your father.

She handed him the receiver. My father always talked too loud on the phone. She whispered, he bellowed.

Well? Have you grown overnight?

He has asked me that for twenty-five years.

Yes, one metre.

That's good. You'll be the greatest yet. I've known that all along. Twenty-five, by golly, girl, a quarter of a century, who would have thought that, eh?

When I returned, the old woman was there, sitting, exactly as before. The parking lot was still deserted, as if a large warning sign were posted at the entrance. I touched her shoulders, shook her gently. Confused, she looked up at me with small, watery blue eyes from a snow-white, soft, slightly crooked face.

What's your name? How did you get here? Where do you live? Who are you?

She looked at me with interest, as if trying to decipher the sense of my words, and kept silent. When I turned to check once more to see if she had a companion—maybe lying unconscious in the undergrowth—she reached for my hand and clasped it.

It'll be all right, I whispered. It'll be all right.

I took off her hat. Her hair was meticulously done and covered with a hairnet that had small pearls woven into it. When I lifted her from the wheelchair she felt light and bony. It seemed she could not move her legs. I had to lift them separately into the car. I buckled her in; she sat straight, her red hat on her lap, and looked alertly through the windshield. As I struggled to stow the wheelchair in the trunk, there was a sudden blast of a song by U2. The woman must have switched on the radio.

It occurred to me that I might still be able to hand her off to another driver. But no. Who would believe that the woman sitting in my car was a total stranger? I switched off the radio. Slowly, she reached out and switched it on again. So she liked U2. I got into the car. We just sat there. Bono, the old woman, and I.

My portable phone rang. It was my mother again.

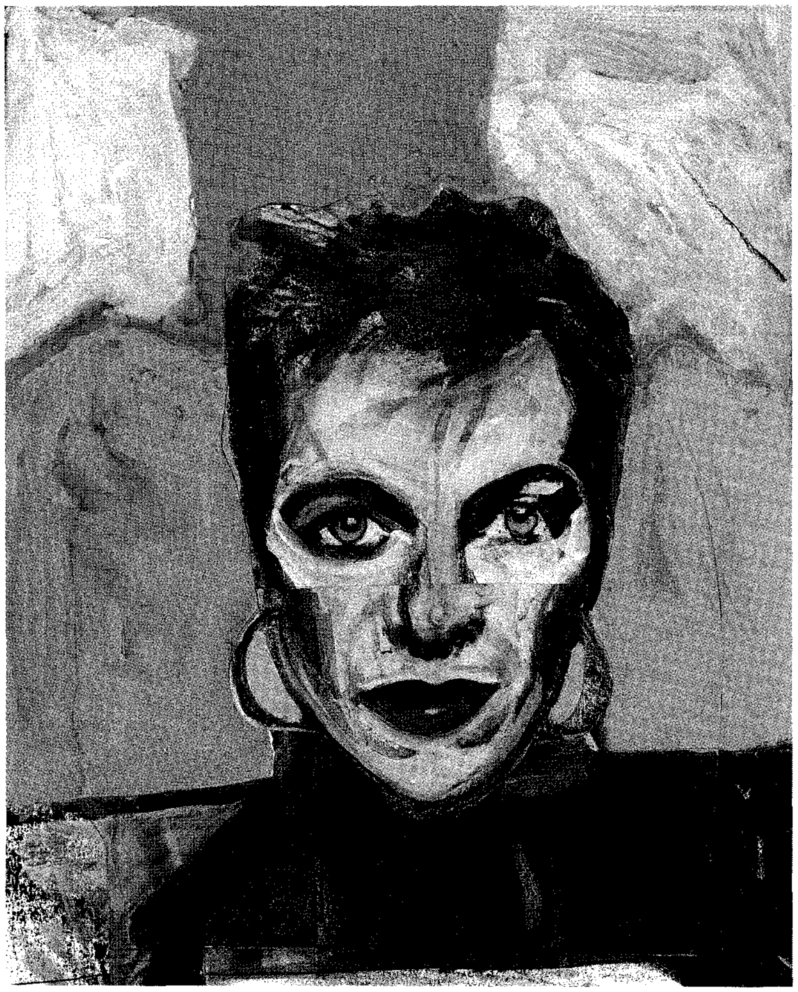
My darling, she said, I believe I completely forgot to wish you a happy birthday. I wish you a wonderful life, she whispered, a rewarding one with a man who will idolize you—that's what I wish for you—a romantic, tender, educated man. Don't get me wrong, your father is a good man. Are you listening?

Yes, Mama.

I can't hear you. Where is that loud music coming from? What are you doing? Is it as hot at your place as it is here?

Yes, Mama.

What I wanted to say—I hope I'm not bothering you—was that you are only twenty-five. When I was your age, I was already married. Yes, that is what I wanted to tell you.



Doris Dörrie's subject is men and women and the messy stuff between them. Her books, tales of romances that never quite work, have titles like "Am I Beautiful?," "The Man of My Dreams," and "Love, Pain, and the Whole Damn Thing."

ANDREA VENTURA

THE windows were wide open, but not a hair on the old woman's head was disturbed. There was a faint smell of mothballs and lavender, of cats and illness and alcoholic liniment. She wore old-fashioned boots, laced all the way up. For the entire drive her legs never moved: they remained exactly where I'd placed them. Once she turned her head like a lizard and looked at me for a long time. Her eyelids wouldn't blink. She just stared. Her face appeared hard and rigid on one side and soft and unmoving on the other. The eye on the rigid side watered.

"Only with You" was on the radio now. This is a program of listeners' love letters, accompanied by the appropriate tunes. "Jens from Wuppertal writes to his Gabi." The announcer had a velvet voice. "My beloved Bunny. Without you the world is pale and empty. What have I done wrong? Without you I am not myself. Please, please, give me another chance. Your Jens."

Jens had requested "When a Man Loves a Woman." I couldn't help it. I started singing. Baby, baby, please don't let me go. I looked at the old woman. She was grinning.

A tear had run down her cheek. She was staring at me again, but perhaps she didn't actually see me. Her head, as if locked in this position, never moved until we stopped at McDonald's in Landsberg.

I bought some French fries and an orange juice and put both under her nose, but she made no attempt to eat or drink. Then I pushed the straw between her lips and, with a loud gurgle, she emptied the entire cup in one go. Wonderful, I said. Then the next problem occurred to me.

Better now than later on the road. I unpacked the wheelchair, heaved her into it, and pushed it into the restaurant. But we couldn't reach the rest-room door; the hallway was much too narrow. I turned the wheelchair around, parked it at the entrance, and lifted her onto my back. No one helped. The customers silently noted my maneuvers. They all seemed to be eating hamburgers.

Listen, I wanted to shout, I don't know the woman on my back. I have never seen her before, I found her, and I don't have to keep her!

Under her small-flowered dress she wore old-fashioned woollen stockings that were fastened to her baggy underpants with clips. I didn't know how the clips worked and it took an eternity to unfasten them. I tugged and tugged. She watched me patiently, as you would watch a child trying to unbutton her own jacket for the first time. When she was finally settled on the toilet, she looked up at me. There was a trace of a smile in one corner of her mouth.

Two girls giggled in the cubicles beside us.

I'm warning you, said the one, if you let him fuck you, he'll never call again.

I don't mind, the other said, and giggled, and, besides, I've got two condoms with me.

Two? sputtered the first one.

Why not? the other said. You don't live forever.

The old woman and I listened. Then the girls left.

I dressed her and carried her back to the wheelchair, and pushed her to a table. I was soaked with perspiration. I walked to the counter to get a large Coke. I was uncertain about returning to her. A fat, bald man was staring at me. Had he taken down my license number? Outside, a woman was videotaping her children on the slide. Perhaps she had caught me, an old woman on my back, as I swayed to the rest room. Amateur moviemakers have a way of anticipating disasters. A Kennedy gets assassinated, a hotel in Manila burns down, an airplane crashes—and there's always someone with a videocamera.

I could see the clip on TV. A good-looking journalist with a dotted tie interrogating me. Why did you take the old, handicapped woman with you in the first place and then abandon her in a fast-food restaurant? Why are you so indecisive, so weak, so without any vision? Why do you visit your parents so seldom? Why don't you move in with your friend, Chris? Why did you break off your studies? Why don't you know what you want?

The celebrations had started without me. Benches and tables stood in a flowering meadow surrounded by a forest; colorful Chinese lanterns hung from trees; a fire burned in the grill; a case of beer and several bottles of wine lay in a small stream. I spotted Chris. He stood beside Rita. His blond hair shone like a flame; he looked young and healthy; he laughed.

He recognized my car, gave his glass to Rita, and ran toward me.

Hey, Vera, where have you been?

Only when he bent down to kiss me did he see the old woman. She was leaning against the other window, asleep.

I found her, I said.

Rita had already seen her. She thought we should inform the police immediately. The others gathered round; everyone had an opinion. Axel wanted to drive her to a hospital. Olaf suggested dropping her off in Lechbruck in front of a home for the aged.

A granny-foundling, Chris said, and laughed.

Imagine if she were your grandmother, Rita said.

Or mother, I said.

Or your wife, Axel said, and you are already dead and you've left her behind.

But *she* isn't my wife, Chris said.

He took my arm and walked with me a few steps across the meadow. His kisses were hot and hungry.

Don't you like the party? he said.

Yes, I said. Thank you.

Yes? he said.

Yes, I said. Thank you.

I bust a gut for you and you say thank you as if I'd just passed you the saltshaker. He ripped off a stalk of grass. I never know how I stand with you. Don't be this way. One day you'll look for me and I'll be gone. Simply gone.

I watched Axel drag the old woman from the car. Her legs got stuck, and the door closed halfway. Axel stood there, helpless. Rita came and grabbed the old woman's legs, and together they carried her across the meadow and set her on a blanket at the edge of the forest. For a while she sat there with her legs outstretched. Then she keeled over onto her back like a beetle.

Axel helped the old woman up again and then sat down beside her. I squeezed my eyes shut until the two of them blurred together and looked like a couple.

PASSING THE MORNING UNDER THE SERENISSIMA

Noon sun big as a knuckle,
tight over Ponte San Polo,
Unlike the sighting of Heraclitus the Obscure,
Who said it's the width of a man's foot.
Unable to take the full
"clarity" of his fellow-man,
He took to the mountains and ate grasses and wild greens,
Aldo Buzzi retells us.

Sick, dropsical, he returned to the city and stretched out on the ground
And covered his body with manure
To dry himself out.
After two days of cure, he died,
Having lost all semblance of humanity, and was devoured by dogs.
Known as "the weeping philosopher," he said one time,
The living and the dead, the waked and the sleeping, are the same.

Thus do we entertain ourselves on hot days, Aldo Buzzi,
Cees Nooteboom, Gustave Flaubert,
The flies and nameless little insects
circling like God's angels
Over the candy dish and worn rug.
The sun, no longer knuckle or foot,
strays behind June's flat clouds.
Boats bring their wild greens and bottled water down the Republic's
shade-splotched canals.

—Charles Wright

I'm pleased, I really am, I said to Chris. Only you can't see it.

This seemed to cheer him up.

Come then, Chris said. Come. He pulled me onto the grass.

I saw a grasshopper hanging on a clover leaf, its wings quivering. Buckbean, buttercup, red bartsia, long-leaved speedwell. My mother had taught me the names of these flowers. Picked, dried, pressed, every spring again and again. I brought my father countless bouquets that always wilted by the time he came home in the evening.

Chris's chin was unshaven, a light stubble on a dark field. He kissed the hollow of my collarbone and squeezed the breath out of me. I straightened up.

Not now, I said. I got up and walked back.

When, Chris yelled after me, when, dammit?

No one gave me a thing I liked, not really. It was as if they didn't know me; even Rita, my best friend, gave me a green silk scarf, although she must know that I can't stand that color.

It grew dark. Rita lit the candles in the Chinese lanterns.

Chris has taken great pains, Rita said to me. It was meant to be really romantic. Now you've brought this woman along, and everything is ruined.

We looked over at her. The old woman was leaning against a tree trunk. Axel was inserting small pieces of wieners into her mouth.

Should I have left her sitting on the Autobahn—and let her die in the heat?

Rita shrugged. Someone would have come along. You aren't the only one, she said.

I didn't understand her. I didn't understand anyone at this party. I sat down on a wobbly wooden bench, holding my plate of food.

Isabel was talking. Isabel was a tall, beautiful girl. She was telling the others about a faked-orgasm competition in a disco in Munich. A little fatso with glasses was the best of them, she said, and everyone laughed. He looked like a fifteen-year-old virgin, but he was at least in his early thirties. He yelped like a dog when you step on its paws, then faster, faster. At the end he was yelling, Oh, Mama, oh, Mama, no, no, yaaaah! She threw her head back and howled. Yaaaah! Yaaaah!

But he only got third prize, she added dryly. The public goes for female orgasms.

Beate from Rosenheim had started beating the bench rhythmically. Isabel joined in, and then the others did as well. The bench was shaking. Yes, everyone shouted, oh, God, yes, yes, yes. They shrieked and howled at the same time.

Jesus, Olaf called, Jesus!

Everyone was laughing. Chris stood beside the fire drinking rum from the bottle and looking at me reproachfully. I opened my mouth and screamed, yes, yes, yes, but he just kept staring and shaking his head.

Axel was still sitting beside the old woman on the blanket. The weak light of the lantern enveloped them. It was a mild, calm evening. The fire threw shadows over the shrieking young people.

Check this out, Axel called out to me. He had taken off the woman's black coat. A notice was sewn into the lining:

> Thank you for helping my mother. Since she had a stroke, she is hemiplegic. She can't speak, nor can she understand anything. I am sorry. But I, too, have only one life.
>
> The daughter.
>
> P.S. She likes it when you stroke her arms.

I sat down beside the old woman and took her arm in my lap. Slowly I stroked her old skin. It felt like a wilted leaf.

The phone in my jacket pocket rang, but I kept stroking her arm.

There was something else I wanted to tell you, said my mother. Petra Kuhn threw herself in front of the subway.

Who is Petra Kuhn?

You don't remember Petra Kuhn? Your best friend in second grade. You must remember that!

Mama, I'm telling you I don't know who she is.

Petra Kuhn, the girl with the clean hands—surely you remember. She always had spotlessly clean hands and fingernails. Four days ago she threw herself in front of the subway. They say she couldn't bear that her father is dying. Cancer. Perhaps she only slipped—no one will ever know for sure. The poor thing. I happened to meet her mother on the street. She looks twenty years older. Terrible, eh? Are you still there?

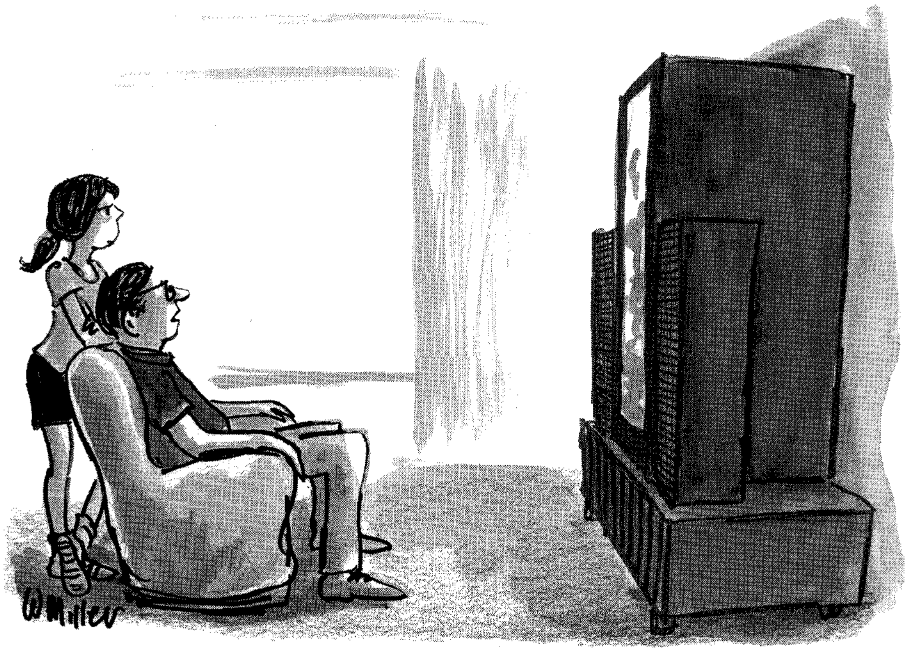
Yes, Mama.

I thought you'd be interested. After all, she used to be your friend. I won't bother you again.

You're not bothering me—not a bit.

My mother breathed quietly into the phone. I stroked the arm of the old woman until I imagined it was my own. Around us the air smelled of fresh grass, resin, and burned wood. ♦

(Translated, from the German, by Gustav A. Richar.)



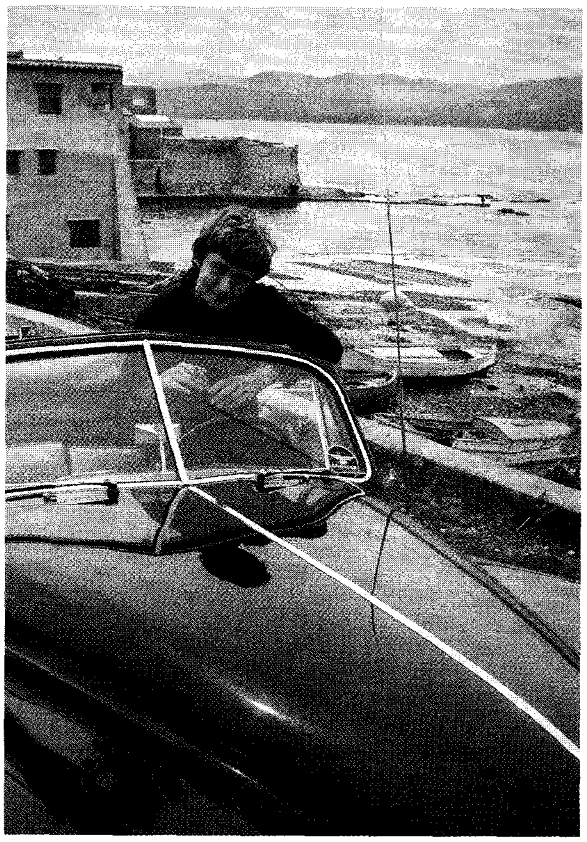
"No, those people aren't anorexic. Those people are starving."

LIFE AND LETTERS

FOREVER A MISTRESS

Who says that a bad girl ever has to grow up? The author meets Françoise Sagan, once the darling of the Riviera crowd.

BY SEBASTIAN FAULKS



Sagan in 1956 and, opposite, photographed by François-Marie Banier, in 1998: Does she still take cocaine? "Par hasard, oui," she says.

(THIS PAGE) MAGNUM PHOTOS

EVERY culture has its secret vices, and for many years French readers have kept a mysterious mistress: the writer Françoise Sagan. At sixty-two, Sagan has written close to forty novels, memoirs, and plays, but is still best known for her first novel, "Bonjour Tristesse," published when she was eighteen. The book won the 1954 Prix des Critiques and sold more than five hundred thousand copies in its first year. François Mauriac—at that time France's most respected novelist—hailed Sagan as a "charming little monster," and "Tristesse" was indeed a remarkable book for a teenager to have written. It told the story of a confused and world-weary seventeen-year-old girl who manipulates her libertine father's two mistresses for her own ends and loses her virginity while on holiday in the South of France. Its precocious ease and economy of style were impressive, as was its glib amorality. The writing was as light as a spring zephyr on the sea at Cannes, but its genealogy was respectable enough for it to be taken seriously: Laclos of "Les Liaisons Dangereuses," Benjamin Constant (the author of "Adolphe"), or even Jean Cocteau's "Les Enfants Terribles."

Within months of the publication, Sagan had joined Brigitte Bardot, Maurice Chevalier, and General de Gaulle as a representative of the spirit of Frenchness to the rest of the world. She became friends with François Truffaut and Claude Chabrol (for whom she wrote the 1963 film "Landru"). And in some ways her later novels attempt a literary version of the charming French films of this period—the existential romantic comedies of Eric Rohmer's œuvre or the freewheeling angst of Truffaut's "Jules et Jim." In these books Sagan continued to portray rich people in pursuit of pleasure, who inhabited a world where spirits were lowered by gray skies or raised by the aroma of coffee, and the transforming epiphany consisted of little more than a moment of unexpected tenderness. But, as the astringency of the Sagan cocktail dwindled, it became clear that her slender novels had less in common with Cocteau than with women's-magazine romances.

Reviewers slowly lost interest in Sagan's work, and journalists began to focus, instead, on the increasingly scandalous saga of her life. A daringly fast driver, Sagan always parked at the door of her destination, whatever the regulations. (Her Aston Martin, its windshield a blizzard of parking tickets, became one of the tourist sights of the Left Bank.) In 1957, she drove into a ditch and survived a subsequent three-day coma. She also made it through two marriages and two divorces within six years. Then came the heavy drinking and the drugs. At times, Sagan's inability to be discreet drove the press to frenzy—as when, for example, she reportedly asked the Interior Ministry to have her banned from all casinos so that she could get her gambling habit under control.

EARLIER this month, I met Sagan one afternoon, at the Plaza Athénée's Bar Anglais—her suggestion—just off the Champs-Élysées. A basement room with a tartan carpet, shiny wood panelling, and fuzzy reggae Muzak, the bar seemed like a cross between a Scottish golf club and a Manhattan restaurant, but its style was what the French call "English," and it was the kind of place where many Sagan characters have planned an indolent intrigue over Kir Royales.

Sagan looked infirm for her age—she walked with the help of a cane—but she spoke rapidly, against the music and the rattle of teacups. Her yellowish hair was cut short, except for long bangs that recalled the photographs of her in the "Bonjour Tristesse" era.

It was the day that Maurice Papon was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment for complicity in crimes against humanity, a momentous day in French

history, since his guilt had taken fifty-four years to establish. After France had been liberated by the Allies, de Gaulle offered his battered country a fairy tale: we resisted the Germans and we freed ourselves by force of arms. His weary, disillusioned people were happy to accept this politically necessary fable. A country sometimes needs to tell itself stories; humankind, as T. S. Eliot remarked, cannot bear very much reality.

Over the years, Sagan's books have also offered an idealized view of France—in this case, a version where the ease and sweetness of life diminish almost all pain, where personal responsibilities count for nothing against the joy of intrigue and stylish living. When I asked Sagan when such an existence might have flourished, she was vague but thought that it could have been sometime between the mid-fifties and the late sixties. She was evasive, too, about the exact ways in which the old days were better. "Life was easier," she told me. "People had different worries. Paris was a very gay town. We talked less about 'communication,' but there was more of it." Yet when I asked her what her books were about she answered, "Solitude, and people's efforts to master it. . . . We are born alone, we live alone, and we die alone."

The youngest of three children, Sagan was born in Cajarc, a town in southern France, in 1935. Her father worked for General Electric, then ran a factory for an American company in Argenteuil. Françoise Quoirez (she took the pen name Sagan from one of Proust's characters) was an impulsive, indulged child who took to writing at an early age. When she moved to Paris, in her teens, she also took to all-night bars, cinema, and whiskey, a bottle of which she kept hidden in her room. "What I've always liked best," she wrote in "Des Bleus à l'Âme," "is to burn up my life, to drink and stun myself."

"Bonjour Tristesse" was published the year that Colette died, and Sagan has been compared with both Colette and Brigitte Bardot—whose name was also beginning to be known and with whom Sagan was acquainted. Jean-Louis Trintignant, Bardot's co-star in "And God Created Woman," recalled spending time with Bardot and Sagan in Saint-Tropez. "Without being feminists, they were like two flags for the liberation of women," he wrote. Bardot soon left her husband, the director Roger Vadim, for Trintignant, while Vadim spent his nights at the Esquinade club, where Sagan danced the cha-cha. Sagan told Trintignant at the time, "You should celebrate the end of a love affair as they celebrate death in New Orleans: with songs, laughter, dancing, and a lot of wine."

Like all self-respecting French writers, Sagan aligned herself with the left in the nineteen-sixties. But her intellectual grasp of economics was never very sure, and she was fond of quoting Napoleon's statement "*L'intendance suivra*" (roughly, "The supply corps will bring up the rear"—or "The money will come later"). She dined regularly with Jean-

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Paul Sartre at the Closerie des Lilas, cutting his meat into small pieces for him when he became too blind to see it. And during the student rebellion in 1968 she arrived at the barricades in her sports car. When a revolutionary youth called out, "What's Comrade Sagan doing here in her Ferrari?" she replied, "It's not a Ferrari, it's a Maserati," and insisted on joining the party.

By the seventies and eighties, however, it had become more difficult to believe in what some critics called Saganland. The people she wrote about, whom the envious might once have called the "jet set," were now "Eurotrash." Sagan's reputation declined, and so did her fortunes. After her car accident, she had become increasingly dependent on a type of morphine that was prescribed to alleviate pain. By 1990, she had received a six-month suspended sentence and a ten-thousand-franc fine for possession of cocaine. And, in 1995, she was given a one-year suspended sentence and fined forty thousand francs for a similar offense.

But when a reputation has been down for so long there is only one way it can go. During the last decade of the century, various critics, tired of the excesses of French literary theory and its novelistic offspring, have tried to reinvent Sagan as an artist. The names of Nancy Mitford and Evelyn Waugh have been invoked. The writer François Nourissier has also compared her with F. Scott Fitzgerald, and speaks of her "gaiety, disenchantment, a certain sadness against a background of naughtiness."

ALTHOUGH Sagan is vague about her work, she is categorical on some matters: her own good fortune, for instance, in having had almost thirty years of "free love" between the invention of the birth-control pill and the advent of AIDS, and in having been able to pursue a career that she has passionately enjoyed. She still aspires to complete a "masterpiece," and has hopes for the collection of essays she's working on now. She claims that she has learned little in the course of her eventful life. She also says that she has no remorse, though perhaps, she adds, she ought to feel more.

I asked her why, at a certain point, journalists chose to stop reviewing her novels and concentrated instead on her

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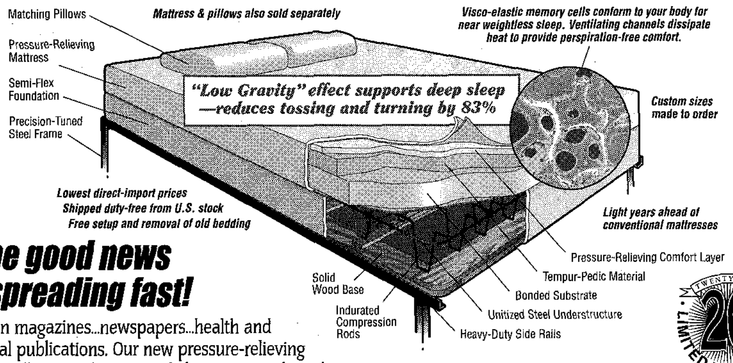
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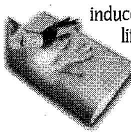

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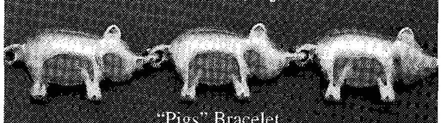

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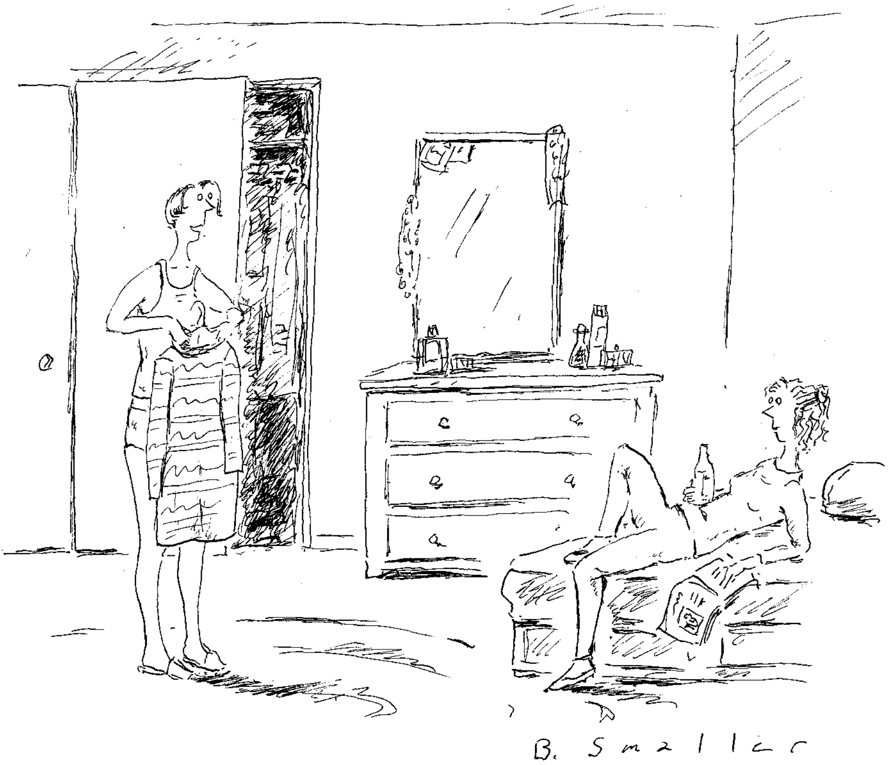


"It's not a completely blind date—he sent me some promotional material."

• •

life. Were the novels of that period especially weak?

"No," she said. "The same." The word she used was *pareil*, which was curiously frank. In its degree of sameness, it is less strong than "identical" but stronger than "similar." It is a commendably fair adjective.

Did she view the similarity between her books as a weakness? Should she not offer the reader something new?

"I don't give a damn about novelty," she answered. Critics have often reproached her for sticking to the same milieu, but when she once wrote about poverty among the coal mines of the North they wondered why on earth she had got herself mixed up with things she didn't understand.

Between sips of Ceylon tea, she confirmed that her whiskey days were over, but she brandished a packet of menthol cigarettes to show that she had not given up all the bad-girl stuff. I asked her whether she still took cocaine.

"*Par hasard, oui*," she answered, which means, more or less, "If it comes along." ("I believe I have a right to destroy myself as long as it does not harm anyone," she'd said in 1995. "If I feel like swallowing a glass of caustic soda, that's my own problem.")

I asked if she still gambled.

"A little bit, but *en cachette*"—on the quiet—was her response.

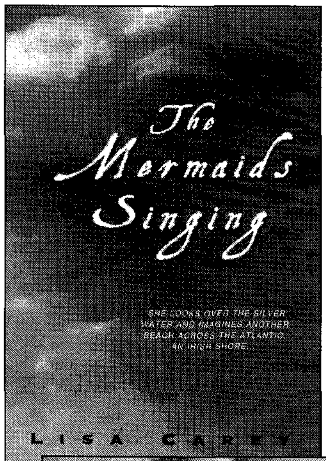
As she made her way out to the Avenue Montaigne, she repeated that she could do whatever she wanted because France was a free country. She seemed a slightly forlorn figure as she disappeared into the evening drizzle. "It's a good thing to be successful when you're young," she had told me. "Then you can get it out of the way."

But do you? According to nouveau-roman writer Alain Robbe-Grillet, Sagan's success was damaging. "She has been a victim of her own talent," he says. "Writing with great facility and urgently needing large sums of money, she has often skimped. This is a pity, because 'Bonjour Tristesse' promised a more important œuvre."

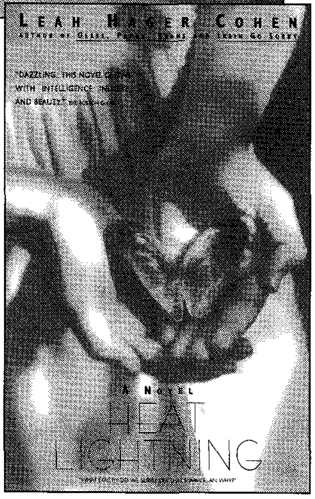
Perhaps it was unlucky for Sagan that such a large audience was prepared to follow her into Saganland for so long: she was never obliged to test and expand her talent. But perhaps she filled another function. If de Gaulle's story of the Resistance was a necessary fiction, Françoise Sagan's fictitious world of sex, sophistication, and the tinkle of champagne glasses may also have been a restorative land to inhabit. ♦

(Advt.)

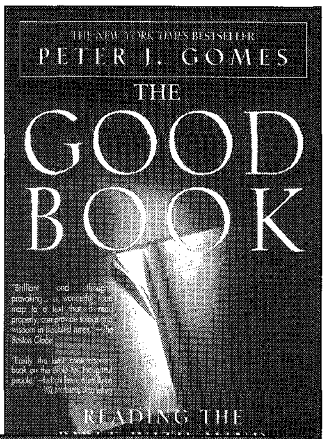
Chances are we have all, at some point in our lives, read a work of fiction or nonfiction that spoke to us in a unique and unforgettable way. Some books do more than speak; they sing.


The Mermaids Singing
She looks over the silver water and imagines another beach across the Atlantic, an Irish shore.
Lisa Carey

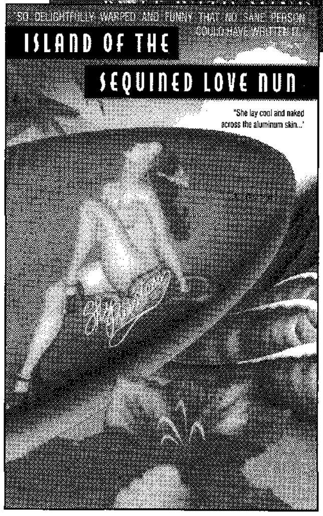
Lisa Carey's debut, ***THE MERMAIDS SINGING***, is wise well beyond the author's twenty six years. Carey's novel—set on a small island off the west coast of Ireland—examines the power of myth, dreams, yearning and family through the stories of three generations of remarkable women: grandmother, mother, and daughter. There is real-life magic in this haunting tale, born of the tension created when the wisdom of age encounters the rebelliousness of youth. It is a story about all the places the human heart wanders on its search for a place to call "home."


Leah Hager Cohen
A Novel
Heat Lightning

That powerful moment when childhood truly ends is captured by **Leah Hagen Cohen** in her novel ***HEAT LIGHTNING***. This is the story of two orphaned sisters whose lives are forever altered during one long, hot summer by the river, when the elaborate mythology they have spun around their parents' deaths is irreparably unraveled. In lyrical and evocative prose, Cohen recreates the inevitable alchemical change that transforms youthful innocence into adolescence, as it opens childish eyes to adult reality.


The New York Times Bestseller
Peter J. Gomes
The Good Book
Reading the

THE GOOD BOOK by **Peter J. Gomes**—preacher to Harvard University—was a *New York Times* bestseller in hardcover. In it, Reverend Gomes cogently explores the ever-evolving role of the Bible in American life, culture and politics, offering us the tools we need to make the sacred, ancient text a dynamic, living part of our daily existence. What the Bible has to tell us all about race, women, homosexuality, joy, science, and mystery are among the many subjects of this author's intelligent and provocative discourse.


So delightfully warped and funny that no sane person could have written it.
Island of the Sequined Love Nun
"She lay cool and naked across the aluminum skin..."

Christopher Moore's ***ISLAND OF THE SEQUINED LOVE NUN*** is an example of the bard as jester. This novel—as quirky as its title—strands a defrocked former pilot for a large cosmetics firm among cannibals, mad doctors, and talking fruit bats on a Micronesian island hell ruled by a beautiful, bored sex goddess. Moore's irreverent look at cargo cults and the messiahs they engender offers nothing less than what should reasonably be expected from an author who, in past novels, has mined the comic possibilities of California vampire love and Native American trickster mythology.

We'll talk again.

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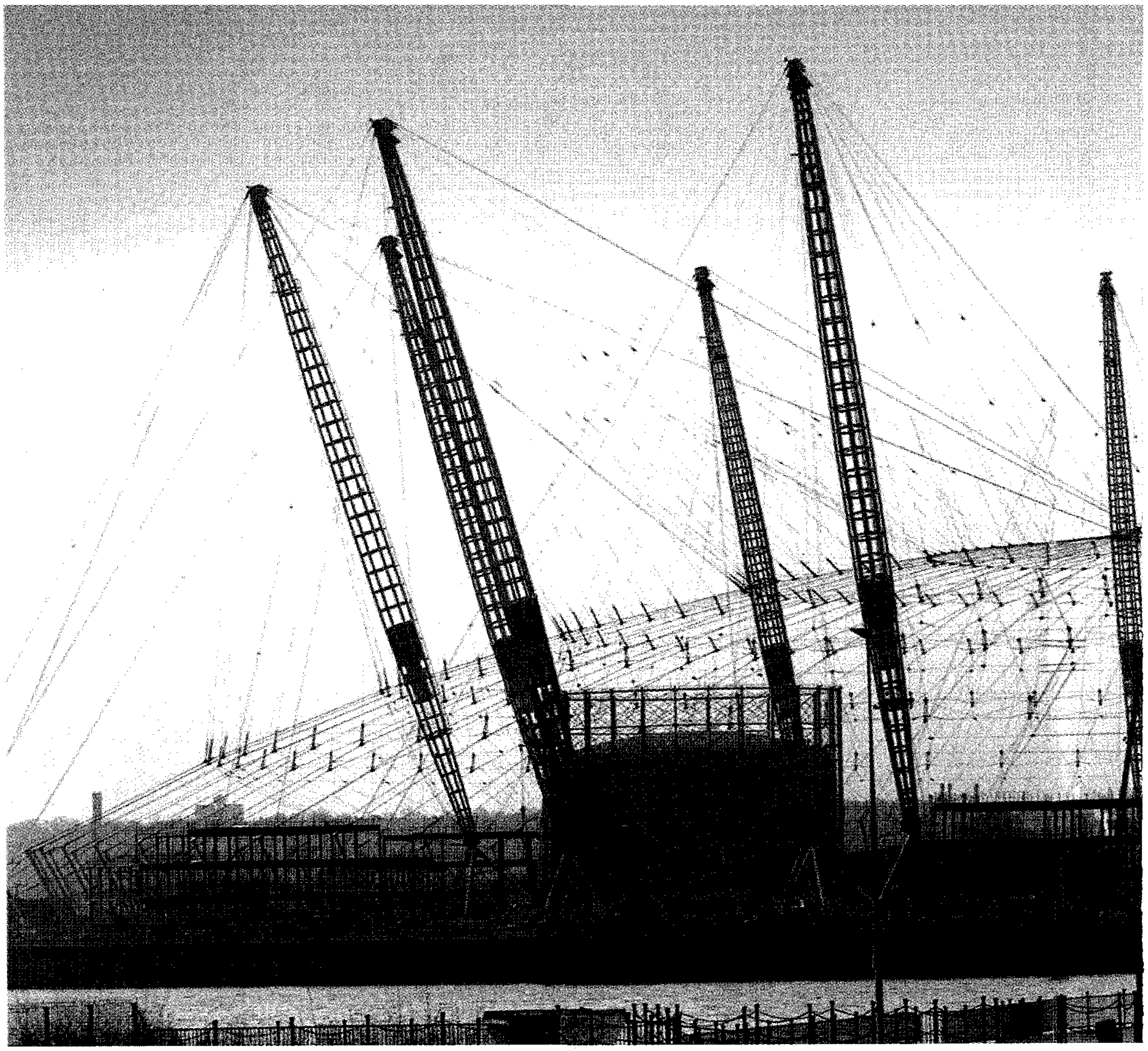
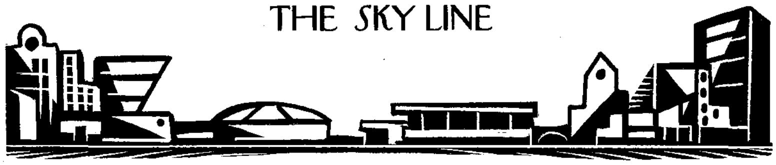


BRIAN HARRIS/THE INDEPENDENT

THE SKY LINE



THE BIG TOP

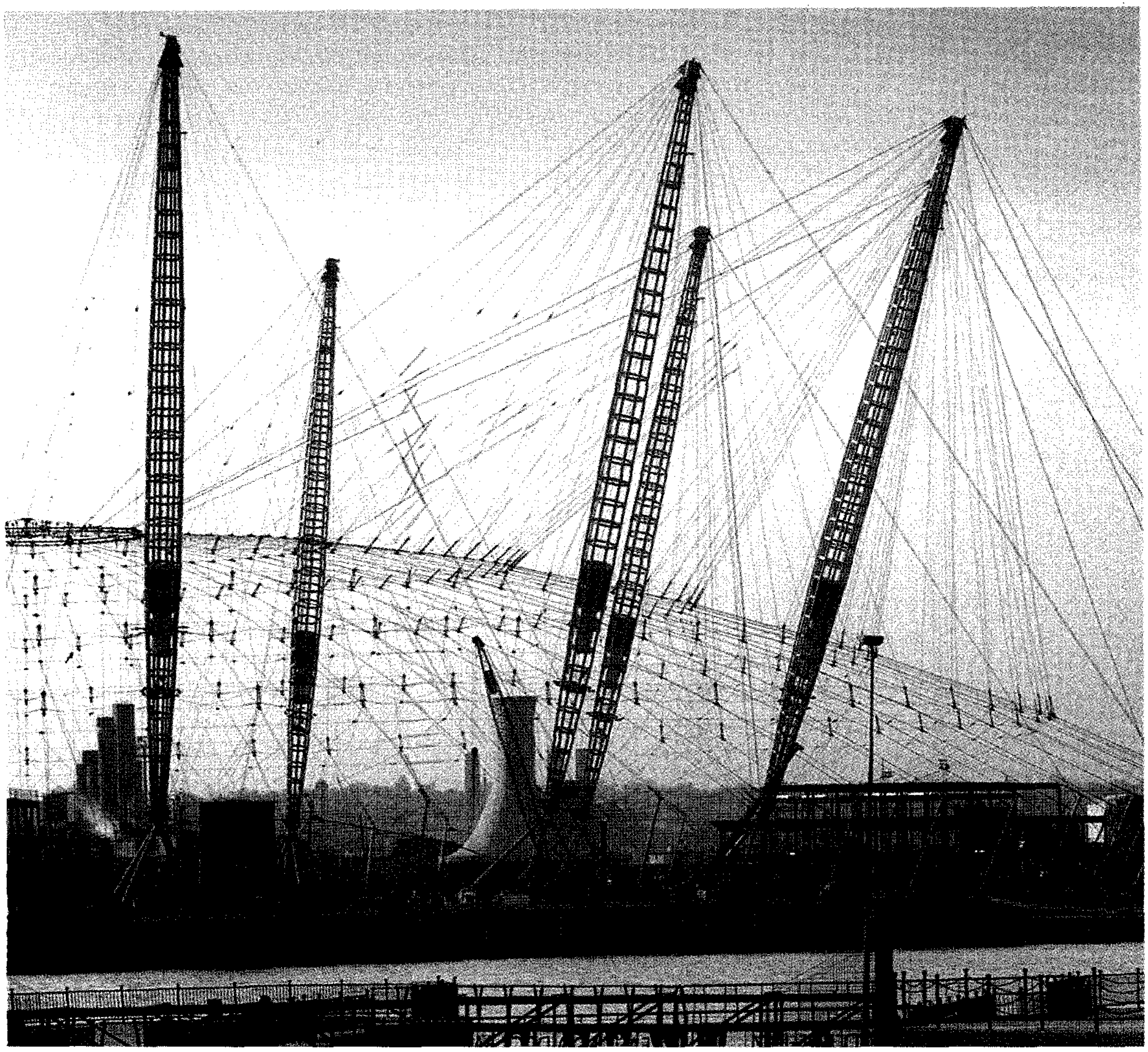
It's impractical, extravagant, and useless—a great European monument.

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

IT is not surprising that the British feel a sort of proprietary interest in the passage of time: with Greenwich as the home of the prime meridian—zero degrees longitude and mean time—they tend to see keeping track of time as a housekeeping duty they perform for the rest of the world, a responsibility that neatly dovetails their country's practical instincts with its imperial ones. With the approach of the millennium, this feeling has intensified, and it has become commonplace to hear people in London say things like "We may no longer have an empire, but we still own time."

But if you think you own time, how do you express that ownership? You could always build a huge clock, but Britain did that more than a century ago: when other countries were adorning their government buildings with domes and spires, the Houses of Parliament got Big Ben, a constant reminder to the world that Britain disdains the purely frivolous and celebrates the useful. The problem for the millennium has been, in effect, to figure out some kind of contemporary version of Big Ben.

The solution is now rising on a polluted industrial site beside the Thames, just slightly to the east of the prime meridian, on the site of a former gasworks that purports to be Greenwich but feels more like a wasteland. Designed by the firm of the architect Richard Rogers—co-designer of the Pompidou Center, in Paris—it will be the world's largest dome, and the biggest fabric-covered structure of its kind ever made. The Millennium Dome, as the thing is called, will be a kilometre in circumference and will enclose twenty acres. It will be big enough to contain thirty-five thousand people at once—or thirteen Royal Albert Halls, or eighteen thousand double-decker London buses.



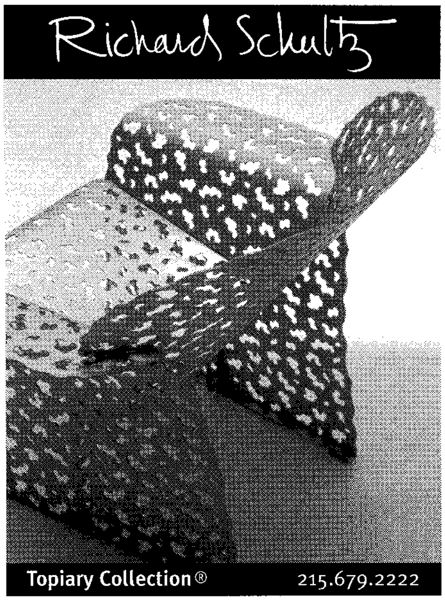
If operating expenses and the costs of creating the exhibitions to go inside it are included, the Dome will end up costing more than $1.2 billion—more than it took to build the Getty Center, in Los Angeles, and enough to build the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, twelve times.

OVER the years, Richard Rogers, one of the world's most gifted architects, has produced numerous visionary schemes for London—projects in which whole sections of the city would be remade in high-tech, rigorous modernism. The closest he has come to achieving those objectives is the dazzling skyscraper headquarters his partnership completed in 1986 for the insurance company Lloyd's. But that is a single building, and its striking appearance belies its conventional purpose. The Dome is different; it has no clearly defined purpose. It is form following form, not form following function, because it has no obvious function except to enclose a lot of space. It is a structural dance, and while Rogers may see it as an opportunity to merge modernist architecture and the image of the new Britain, politically that has turned out not to be so simple.

The Dome is being built on a flat muddy peninsula an awkward mile or so from the part of Greenwich which tourists have traditionally gone to visit. The famous landmarks, like Inigo Jones's exquisite Palladian Queen's House and the sumptuously baroque Royal Naval College, by John Webb, Sir Christopher Wren, and Sir John Vanbrugh, lie to the south and west, around a bend in the Thames. Cleaning up the messy hundred-and-eighty-one-acre site has taken roughly thirty million dollars. Polluted topsoil is being removed from the ground, but every so often putrid smells seep up from lower levels.

When I walked around the construction site in late March, the frame was complete and the installation of the fabric was just beginning. Taxicab-yellow steel trusses from which hang cables that will support the off-white fabric roof stood out crisply against the blue sky. It was hard to feel that you were inside a structure at all, or even to have any sense of scale. When a building is that big, its having no roof makes it hard to have any real idea where space begins or ends. Once the roof is on, the Dome will feel bigger, not smaller, just the way a room feels bigger when the furniture goes in, because its size in relation to the

The new Prime Minister, Tony Blair, wanted a monument that would entertain his thirteen-year-old son.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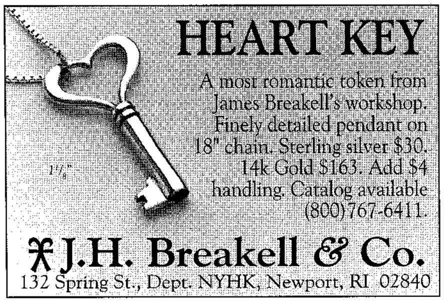
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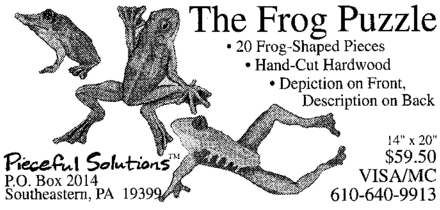
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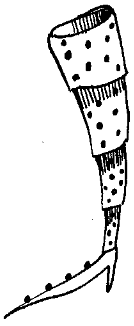
human figure becomes more apparent. Now, however, the Dome just looks like carefully composed steel stabbing against the sky: sculpture, not architecture.

Around the perimeter, steel-framed boxes were being erected to house service functions; each was the equivalent in size of a two-story office building, yet inside this vast, undefined space they looked like nothing more than maquettes. There are currently six hundred managers and builders working on the site; by next October, there will be two thousand, since the one thing a building for the millennium cannot be is late.

"If I don't meet the date, I get hanged, and if I don't meet the budget, I get flogged," David Trench, who is the director of development, said to me as he marched across the site in a hard hat and oversize rubber boots. "My aim is to get flogged rather than hanged."



THE Dome had its beginnings with the Labour government's Conservative predecessors. It was Peter Brooke, Secretary of State for the National Heritage, who, in 1994, made the first proposal to mark the millennium with a national exhibition. At first this seemed destined for Birmingham, which had lined up enough corporate sponsorship to carry the entire cost. But who would travel to a provincial city two hours from London? Michael Heseltine, John Major's Deputy Prime Minister, pushed for Greenwich, viewing it as the next step in the redevelopment of East London. And, of course, no place could compete with Greenwich for the appealing symbolism of its position at the prime meridian. By 1996, Greenwich it was. Richard Rogers and his partner, Michael Davies, were hired to design some kind of enclosure, even though no one had the slightest notion what would go inside. Davies came up with the concept of a dome, and the project began.

As plans for the Dome got firmer, John Major's government was becoming shakier. The Labour Party didn't appear to have much enthusiasm for the project, which seemed both overly grandiose and, in the light of its origins as the Birmingham exposition, too overtly a celebration of private enterprise. As it became increasingly clear that the Conservative government was not long for this world, the smart money figured that, once Labour had taken over, the whole thing would be aborted. Better to write off the few million pounds already spent than to get stuck in Tory quicksand.

Then Tony Blair became Prime Minister, and things looked—well, different. He said he wanted Britain to mark the millennium with something that would excite his thirteen-year-old son, Euan, and in Blair's mind the Dome did that. It hardly hurt that Richard Rogers was one of Blair's best friends in London, and that the Prime Minister enjoyed eating at the River Café, a fashionable West London restaurant that Rogers's wife, Ruth, had run since 1987. Still, Blair had a problem. Much of his own party opposed the Dome, and in Blair's first months the sniping in the press about it was relentless. The tabloid newspaper the *Sun* went as far as to mount a "Dump the Dome" campaign. The project risked becoming a ridiculous and irredeemable pork barrel.

In June of 1997, however, Blair formally committed himself to continuing with the Dome, saying, "Britain need not settle for second best," and he put Peter Mandelson, his Minister without Portfolio, in charge. Mandelson, a forty-four-year-old with a fondness for control and publicity that has endeared him to few of his Labour colleagues, hadn't been a particular fan of the Dome before Blair's turnaround, but he quickly achieved the zeal of a convert. Mandelson saw the appointment as a kind of manifest destiny. His maternal grandfather, Herbert Morrison, had organized the Festival of Britain in 1951, a century after the triumphant Great Exhibition of 1851. The Festival had been designed as a celebration of Britain's postwar emergence and, like the Millennium Dome, it had seemed directionless and vague at the beginning, had been widely scorned by the cognoscenti, but in the end was a success. Mandelson envisioned pulling off a similar rescue mission. Blair began to refer to Mandelson as the Dome Secretary, and by the fall of 1997 the two men had become so

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closely associated with the Dome that its Tory origins were all but forgotten.

For Blair, the millennium is an opportunity to proclaim the image of self-assured Britain at the cutting edge of technology and productivity. An empty building, though, no matter how magnificent, doesn't fill that bill. The Dome had to have something in it—and, preferably, something more imaginative than the big-business fair that the Conservatives had been planning. What was needed was something that would be entertaining, stylish, and fresh—something that would show the world that Labour had changed the country.

The enormous cost of financing the project also had to be considered. According to figures published by the New Millennium Experience Company, the government-led organization responsible for the Dome, the National Lottery will provide some four hundred million pounds, and companies such as British Telecom and British Airways have brought in nearly sixty million of a projected hundred and fifty million pounds in corporate sponsorship. Admission fees will have to cover the rest. The Dome must attract twelve million visitors, paying approximately seventeen pounds (twenty-eight dollars) per person, during the year 2000 if it is to break even. That's as many as seventy thousand visitors a day.

Early plans for the Dome included a grand pageant, to be staged by Sir Cameron Mackintosh. But Mackintosh's plan was dropped, because his pageant proved too expensive. In the summer of 1997, Stephen Bayley, who was the founding director of the Design Museum, in London, was asked to join the Millennium team, in the hope that his presence would give the floundering project some stature. Mandelson himself flew off to Disney World in early January, in search of ideas. It may have been the most ill-advised visit of a politician to Disney World since Richard Nixon went to Orlando and uttered his famous "I am not a crook" line there. In a matter of months, Bayley went from being the Dome's greatest proponent to being its sharpest enemy. After Mandelson's trip to Orlando, Bayley abruptly quit, accusing Mandelson of being bedazzled by theme parks. He claimed that the way Mandelson was handling the project was "ab-

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solutely scary," and said he was so impressionable that if the Minister "went down to a voodoo sacrifice in Brixton tonight, he'd come back tomorrow saying, 'We must have voodoo sacrifices in the Dome.' "

That was only the beginning. Several prominent British clergymen suggested that there might be other ways to mark the two-thousandth anniversary of the birth of Christ rather than by creating a secular theme park. Mandelson replied by telling the *Daily Telegraph* that the "impact of Christianity on Western civilization will be central to the Millennial experience"—a remark that seemed only to underscore Bayley's observation that Mandelson barely had a program.

At the end of February, the New Millennium Experience Company unveiled a preliminary outline of twelve separate theme exhibitions in the Dome, which included "Serious Play" (a way to "find out how leisure can reactivate your life") and "Spirit Level," where visitors can "experience a moment of peace and reflection." Dome visitors will also be able to "decide what being British means for our futures." A section called "The Body Zone" will contain "the world's biggest physical representation of the human form"—a hundred-and-seventy-foot-high androgynous sculpture, which will be sitting upright with both hands on one knee and the other leg outstretched, while a companion sculpture of a gigantic baby will be crawling toward it. The grotesque figure, whose sex the New Millennium Experience Company refuses to discuss, will contain exhibitions about human biology.

The difference between the criticisms of the 1851 and 1951 expositions and the Millennium Dome, Stephen Bayley has said, is that then "the philistines were on the outside; today I'm afraid the philistines are on the inside."

WHEN the plans were released, Jonathan Glancey, the design correspondent for the *Guardian*, dismissed the project as tired, outdated science fiction. "Why should the future have to look like sets from Seventies science fiction TV programmes?" he wrote. Glancey took particular issue with the aura of boosterism surrounding the project. "Not all children wish to conform, and it has often been Britain's nonconformists—Wollstonecraft, Blake . . . Ruskin, Morris, The Beatles—who have pushed British creativity to new and far limits."

After the article appeared, Glancey received a telephone call from someone who identified himself as a member of the Prime Minister's press office and said that since Blair was quite high on the Dome project, he had thought that people like Glancey would have better understood its significance. Glancey, startled, forgot to ask the man's name, so he called back, and was given the name of an official. He published a column about the incident, citing the name he had been given. The official thereupon denied having made the call and threatened to sue. The *Guardian* published an admission of the error.

"We know when a government is rattled," Glancey, a wiry, energetic man, recently said to me. "But what does it gain by doing this?" He reflected a moment. "To be actually up against a government is so bizarre, especially since many of its policies of urban renewal are ones that people like me have advocated for decades. I even voted for it. For a government that has prided itself on learning from America and its spin jargon—put that together with Disney and it really is all Americanized."

IT is easy to think of the way that Britain has approached its millennium celebrations as being notable for its sheer un-Britishness. What Margaret Thatcher sowed in stern Englishness, Tony Blair seems to be reaping in exuberant Americanism. Together, the slogans (the official one is "Time to make a difference") and the earnest enthusiasm seem to contribute to the widespread belief that Blair has turned Britain into a triumph of American-style marketing.

And yet Britain is also the country that marked 1851 with the Crystal Palace, then the largest building in the world; it is where Mme. Tussaud, in 1835, established her waxworks, an institution in which vulgarity makes only the slightest pretense of gentility; and it is where illuminated outdoor advertising, in Piccadilly Circus, achieved a brazenness that Paris would never have tolerated. Britain has always been a lot more willing to indulge in the big, the brash, and the hyped than the myth of British reserve would have the world believe.

What Britain has never felt comfortable with, sadly, is uselessness—the kind of pure, glorious monumentality that leav-

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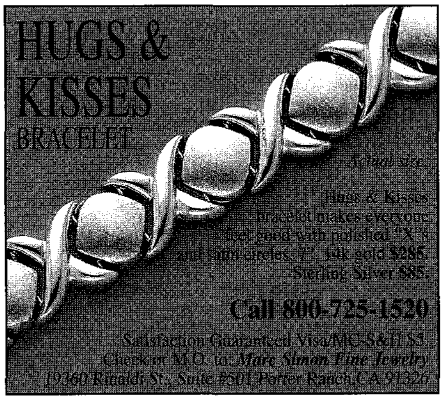

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ing the Dome empty would represent. "What do we remember from the 1851 exhibition but the Crystal Palace? Or from the 1889 Paris exhibition but the Eiffel Tower?" Alex Lifschutz, a London architect, said to me over dinner at the River Café, next door to the building in which both his firm and Richard Rogers's have offices. "If we as architects can create the settings in which people can feel deep emotions, then we will have done our job."

"If you ask anyone who went to the Festival of Britain what was inside and on exhibit, they won't remember," said Hugh Pearman, the architecture and design critic for the *Sunday Times*. "It's just the experience of being there." He added, "The Dome is just the excuse for the event."

But whatever will go inside, or at least the controversy about it, will inevitably affect people's perceptions of the Dome, which leaves Richard Rogers in an awkward position. He cannot quite bring himself to endorse everything that is being planned for the interior of his Dome, but he cannot afford to distance himself from it, either. "We're sort of caught," he said. "One can quite clearly see signs that the content is being handled by management, and managements don't really create things. What we now need is inspiration—a ringmaster, a person who will have a vision, who will make this more than purely entertaining."

Rogers is unfazed. He did, after all, go through the process of building the Pompidou Center in the nineteen-seventies, which suffered many of the same kinds of attacks. "They did everything possible to try to stop the Pompidou," he said. "Every big scheme has exactly the same problems. They said the same things in 1951, too. History repeats itself."

Mike Davies, a bearded former hippie, who is known as the Red Man—he wears red shirts, red ties, a red belt, and red shoes, and drives a red Jaguar—looks like the sort of person who would be protesting against the expenditure of public money on such an extravagance as the Dome. But he is passionate about it, and has come to think of himself, Rogers, and the Dome as the heirs of Sir Joseph Paxton, the designer of the Crystal Palace. "The great engineering feats like Paxton's have always inspired our practice," he said. He described the extreme lightness of the structure he and Rogers have devised. "The entire thing weighs less than the

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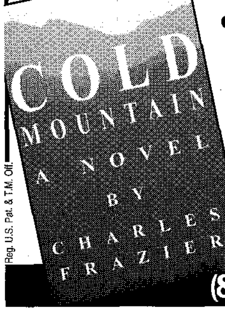

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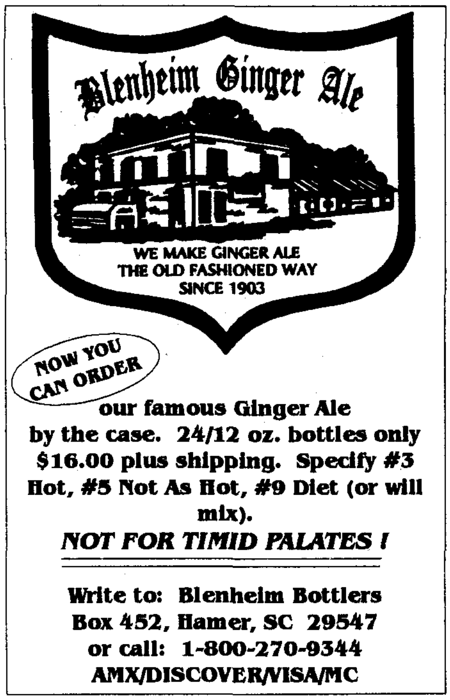
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air inside it—that is why it is so brilliant," he says. "It is awesomely large—I am still surprised by the power of its scale—but there is such economy of means that it is a wonderful testimony to minimal materials. It is the lightest structure of its type on the planet."

For all its size, however, the building is not as innovative a piece of architecture as the Pompidou Center was when it was designed, a quarter century ago. The German architect Frei Otto designed more poetically shaped fabric structures back in the nineteen-seventies. But finesse has rarely, if ever, been present on so gargantuan a scale as it is here. Megabuildings are usually crude; this one is almost delicate, even as it leaps across the earth, and it has a stunning serenity, which gives it a power as a pure object which transcends any use to which it might be put.

"IT'S something you would have expected in France under Mitterrand," Richard Burdett, who heads an architecture program at the London School of Economics, said to me. The French, however, for all the effort they had put into their *grands projets* and the prestige they expected to get out of them, never seemed so insecure about the results. Mitterrand would have prided himself on ignoring critics. Imperially, of course, is the only way you can build projects that are vast in scope, cost, and ambition.

The French have always built, and the public be damned. In fact, the more useless a structure is, the better: the Arc de Triomphe, the Pompidou Center, and the Louvre pyramids are, first and foremost, shots of adrenaline into the urban bloodstream, and their official functions are secondary. Even the Germans, for all their relentless Protestantism, understand this: Berlin may be filling up with office buildings, but for two glorious weeks in 1995 it also had Christo's wrapped Reichstag, one of the most spectacular pieces of urban transformation in modern times: a hundred and twenty square yards of billowing silvery fabric turned the haunted once-and-future parliament building into a glowing, soft package and the surrounding open space into an endless street fair. The Reichstag project was temporary and frightfully expensive, as the Millennium Dome will be, but its magnificence appeared to occasion only joy.

GRANDIOSE architecture combined with shared meaning equals monumentality. It is a rare quality. Practicality can get in the way of symbolism: monumentality requires a certain degree of abstraction. When the Eiffel Tower was first proposed, forty-seven of the nation's artists, including Charles Gounod, Guy de Maupassant, and Alexandre Dumas *fils*, wrote to the government urging that it stop the "monstrous" tower, "a black and gigantic factory chimney" which even "commercial America would not have." Revealingly, they opposed the tower not because it had no practical purpose but because it seemed too industrial, and they feared that it would profane the essentially monumental nature of their city. The Eiffel Tower achieved its real destiny after the exposition of 1889 was over, and the tower continued to occupy the Parisian skyline, in all its supreme uselessness. ("It is impossible to flee this pure sign, *for it means everything*," Roland Barthes wrote in 1964.)

Americans are less comfortable with pure monumentality. Except for the Washington Monument, there are few great American structures that do not also have some prosaic purpose. If, as James Marston Fitch observed, the nineteenth century was marked by three great structural achievements—the Crystal Palace, which enclosed great space; the Eiffel Tower, which reached great height; and the Brooklyn Bridge, which spanned great distance—it is significant that the most purely practical of these structures is the American one. And, just as Britain is poised between the Continent and America, Rogers's Millennium Dome seems caught between European imperial grandeur and eager American efficiency. It wants to be a pure monument, but the present government appears to see only wastefulness in that.

And so the government tries to emulate not the timeless power of the Crystal Palace and the Eiffel Tower but the dated earnestness of their exhibitions. Such priorities make far less sense than they did in the nineteenth century, when

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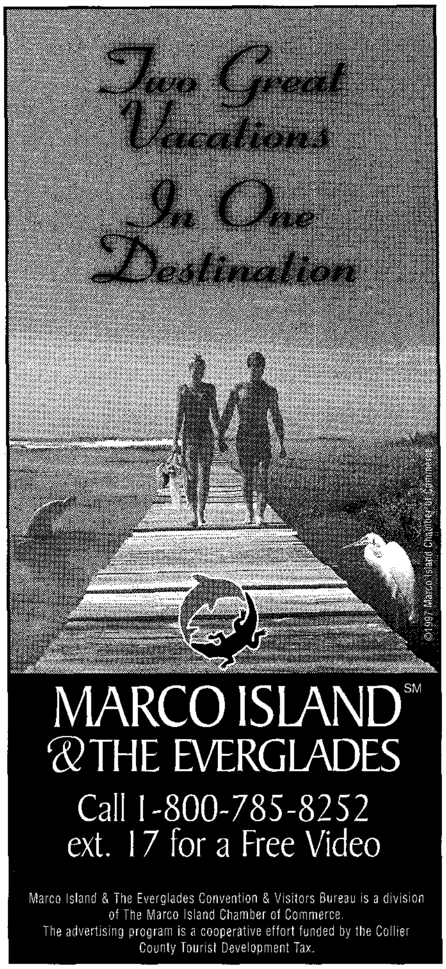
expositions at least gave people the chance to see the new technology and its promise of enlightenment. Today, such a promise merely causes the eyes to glaze over. At the end of the twentieth century, technology and information are available everywhere, to a far wider spectrum of the population than ever before. Entertainment, which was once barely connected to the communication of information, is now almost inseparable from it. To a generation familiar with the Internet, cellular telephones, and digital video disks, what could possibly be in an international exposition that won't be for sale at the corner electronics store within six months? And why should a government even be trying to do what everyone knows Disney can do better?

If there is any reason to stage such an event today, it is to do something different: it is related to the notion of the authenticity of public experience. That is the striking paradox of the Millennium Dome. For, while its programming weakly echoes theme parks and world's fairs, the project does contain the promise of bringing people out of their houses for the one experience that the world of technology denies them: that of being in a large public space together with other people. What the New Millennium Experience Company has failed to grasp is that the success of the Dome lies in the building itself, and not in what the company puts inside it. It is a place that will allow people—for a short while at least—to sustain some illusion that they possess common ground.

The Millennium Dome seems to be monumental in the best sense of the word, yet at the same time its contents threaten to render it trite and insignificant. It is as if Britain is so ill at ease with immensity and grandeur that it can only trivialize them. Blair and Mandelson speak of vision but seek only consensus. Preferring entertainment to awe, they cut monumentality off at the knees.

When the roof is finished, later this year, the Dome will be the world's most spectacular empty space. It is unfortunate that the British are unwilling to leave it that way. The Dome could be the greatest revival tent in history, awash with crowds at the turn of the millennium, and a glorious monument thereafter, with its extravagant uselessness conferring a far more profound wonder than any of its exhibits could ever hope to achieve. ♦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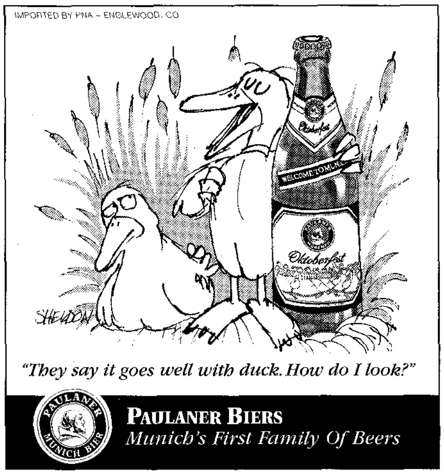
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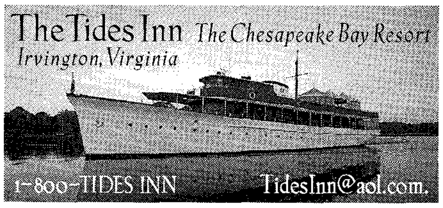
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53. Please send me information on all the numbered items in this category.

980427

ANSWERS TO 8 X 10 CRYPTIC NO. 41

ACROSS

1	GO-C + ART (*cog* rev.)
7	EVAN (rev.)
8	ETON (rev.)
9	DEPOT (rev.)
11	S(LAPD)ASH
12	A + URA
15	ME + S.A.
16	O(K COR)RAL (*rock* rev.)
18	U.N. + TIL (*lit* rev.)
19	NOEL (anag.)
20	PURR (*per* hom.)
21	CAR + PET

DOWN

1	GETS AROUND (anag.)
2	O + VAL
3	CA(TARAC)T (*carat* rev.)
4	REEDS (*reads* hom.)
5	BOO(S)TS
6	ON THE ALERT (hidden)
10	P(APER CU)P
13	hUNK + NOT
14	V(OIL)A
17	ACRE (anag.)

BRIEFLY NOTED

Diaries of a Young Poet, by Rainer Maria Rilke; translated from the German by Edward Snow and Michael Winkler (Norton; $27.50). Three diaries reveal three Rilkes. The Florence Diary, which he began at twenty-two, is a kind of open letter to his then love, Lou Andreas-Salomé, full of youthful ardor and sublime observations of art and nature. (Even the pansies outside his window are like "warm, watchful eyes.") The Schmargendorf Diary reveals the virtuoso at play, with slender fragments of stories, fairy tales, and poems following each other in dazzling succession. The last diary, written during his stay in Worpswede, is the most rewarding, for the chance to watch Rilke's rich friendships with other artists ripen alongside the growing authority of his poetic voice.

The Seville Communion, by Arturo Pérez-Reverte; translated from the Spanish by Sonia Soto (Harcourt Brace; $24). The author of "The Club Dumas" has crafted another intricate literary mystery in which the Catholic Church is a central player. After two mysterious deaths in a crumbling church in Seville, slated for demolition, a hacker leaves a warning on the Pope's personal computer that this church "kills to defend itself." The Vatican sends its coolly intelligent emissary Father Lorenzo Quart to investigate. Quart is stoically at ease in his role as a soldier of Rome, but he finds his objectivity gradually eroding in the face of an alluring Andalusian duchess and the pugnacious faith of the local priest. By the end, to wrenching effect, Quart's Church lies exposed: the corporate interests of a multinational firm pitted against the deep spiritual solace it provides.

Are You Somebody, by Nuala O'Faolain (Holt; $21). This rich, fierce memoir by a columnist for the Irish *Times* describes growing up in the kind of poverty that had her mother raiding the gas meter for shillings while her father ignored his nine children and kept a mistress on the other side of town. The nascent women's movement and O'Faolain's expansive love of reading kept her afloat: she made it to college, rubbed elbows with literary Dublin, and became a BBC producer in London. Despite her struggles with alcohol and failed relationships, she knows that she's one of the lucky ones. The heartrending letters from readers, quoted in the afterword—a response to the book's intensely emotional reception in Ireland—attest to her ability to speak for the voiceless people in her "little Irish world."

Nietzsche in Turin, by Lesley Chamberlain (Picador; $23). In this fascinating "intimate biography" of the critical year Nietzsche spent in Turin from 1888 to 1889, Chamberlain discovers that the philosopher of the Übermensch was actually Human, All Too Human. We find a shy bourgeois seeking out fat-free cocoa and low-salt salami, trying to get a proper stove installed in his drafty quarters, and, unlike Zarathustra, prone to sickness when travelling in the Alps. By the year's end, the brilliant contradictions that Nietzsche embodied, combined with an advanced case of syphilis, were forcing the dramatic breakdown that would forever taint the philosopher's reputation.

Native Land, by Nadja Tesich (Brookline; $15.95). Anna, the narrator of this Woolfian first novel, believes that not a room of one's own but a homeland is what matters most. A native of pre-divided Yugoslavia, Anna, whose family emigrated to New York when she was fourteen, returns to Dubrovnik thirty-five years later, in 1991, for a feminist conference; there she discovers that her national identity is as fragile and unsettled as that of her native country, which is on the brink of civil war. What guides this quietly poignant novel along is Anna's interior monologue, which investigates the grandiose questions ("Who am I?") as well as the ordinary ones (where to buy light bulbs), and ultimately demonstrates just how grounded she truly is, despite—or perhaps because of—her homelessness.

The Factory of Facts, by Luc Sante (Pantheon; $24). In this absorbing memoir, the Belgian-born Sante painstakingly sifts through the past, yet the past that he unearths is not fully his own. Instead, it is the story of previous generations of Santes, of the oddities of the Walloon language, and of the bleak wonders of Belgium: "Fried potatoes. Shrubbery. The color grey." Moving to New Jersey at a tender age forced him to become a creature of memory, and it's this habit of taking history personally that enables Sante to re-create hours, days, and entire eras in photographic detail.

The Lüneburg Variation, by Paolo Maurensig; translated from the Italian by Jon Rothschild (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $19). "They say that chess was born in bloodshed." So begins this accomplished first novel, in which the death of an imperious Munich businessman and chess expert named Frisch sets the story in motion. In flashback, a young stranger on a train tells of his apprenticeship to a brilliant Jewish chess master, who played their first match without his queen, and without looking at the board, and won. The author skillfully reveals the details of a bitter rivalry that began in Nazi Germany and continued in Bergen-Belsen, but the reader may find it difficult to reconcile the pleasures of this literary chess game with the horrors on which it's based.

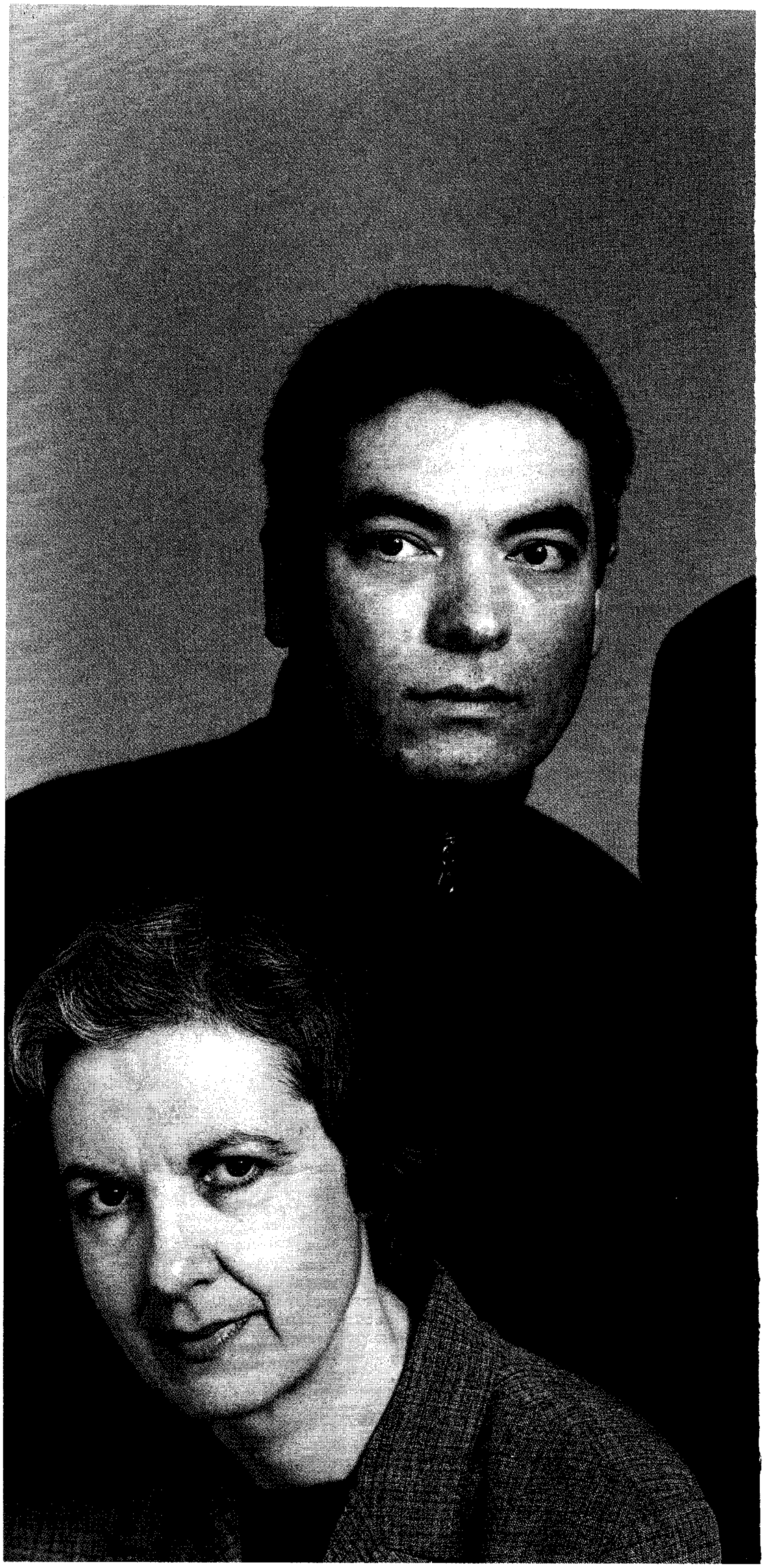
Mysticism for Beginners, by Adam Zagajewski; translated from the Polish by Clare Cavanagh (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $20). In this, his third collection available in English, Zagajewski reminds us once more of what poetry can do, how it lets us "Suddenly . . . see the world lit differently." And what a world these poems reveal—a Europe in ravishing shambles, asleep "beneath a coarse plaid of borders/and ancient hatreds." Contemplative and grimly ironic, with a metaphysical sense of metaphor, Zagajewski is considered the leading poet of a generation of postwar Polish writers, and these heart-staggering poems should only widen his reputation.

SHOWCASE
BY RICHARD AVEDON

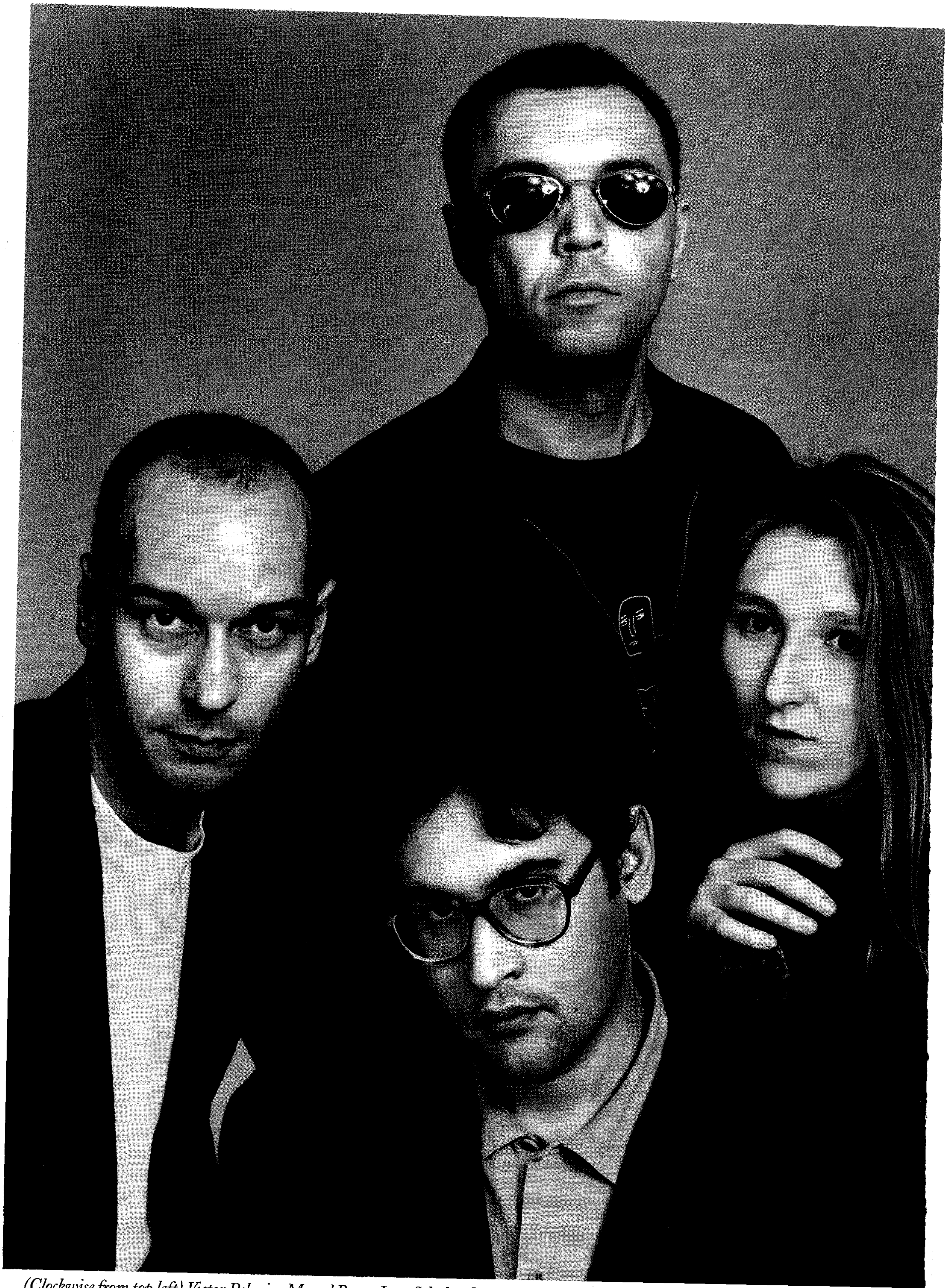
SING, BRITANNIA

DURING the two hundred and fifty years between Henry Purcell and Benjamin Britten, the U.K. produced no composer who was indisputably of the first rank. Early in this century, major talents like Edward Elgar and Ralph Vaughan Williams emerged, but their reputations never quite escaped bucolic provincialism. After the Second World War, international modernism crept in: the greatly admired Harrison Birtwistle, for example, wrote music with all the aural allure of a chest of drawers being pushed across a floor. Now contemporary British music is a delightful melee of styles and personalities. Composers of the younger generation—five of whom are pictured here—combine intricacy and accessibility, harshness and lyricism, politics and song. Judith Weir has gone back to harmonic basics and created a fresh and lucid language. She writes wonderfully for the human voice. Simon Holt has found ways to introduce surface sensuality and subterranean menace into the scurrying processes of the avant-garde. Mark-Anthony Turnage writes brutal and angry music; in fact, "brutal and angry" is the marking for the first section of his "Twice Through the Heart," which New York Philharmonic musicians will play on April 26th. But he puts craftsmanship into his explosions and often leaves terrible wistfulness in their wake. James MacMillan is a Scot who has won large audiences with a mixture of aggression and meditation. He plays ingenious variations on the venerable English choral tradition. Thomas Adès, the young genius looming in the back, recently astounded critics with his first full-length orchestral piece, "Asyla," whose intense concentration of musical ideas invites comparison not only with Britten but, more riskily, with Beethoven. His first opera, "Powder Her Face," is a savage, gorgeous satire on fifties Britain that deals with the Duchess of Argyll's sensational divorce. It comes to BAM in December.

—ALEX ROSS



(From left to right) Judith Weir, Simon Holt, Thomas Adès, Mark-Anthony Turnage, and James MacMillan.



(Clockwise from top left) Victor Pelevin, Marcel Beyer, Ingo Schulze, Marie Darrieussecq, Juan Manuel de Prada, and Lawrence Norfolk.

BEST YOUNG NOVELISTS

NOVELISTS, unlike musicians and painters, are rarely prodigies. Every now and then, a twenty-something will startle readers with his or her originality—the young Thomas Mann, say. But most authors need time to learn: the language, the business of storytelling, maybe just something of life. Last year, we set out to identify the most promising young writers in Europe—an easy task if forty is "young," but impossible if youth ends at thirty. We settled on thirty-five, chose six, and invited them to London for this photograph.

Ingo Schulze grew up in Dresden, and his unembellished fiction, which has been compared to the work of Raymond Carver, offers an unsettling picture of the newly unified Germany. Marcel Beyer grew up in Cologne, then moved east, to Dresden. An avant-garde ventriloquist, he tells the story, in "The Karnau Tapes," of a sound technician with a privileged assignment: recording Hitler's last utterances. The French writer Marie Darrieussecq is the metamorphosing eroticist of her generation: her first novel, "Pig Tales," follows a woman who turns into a sow; her second, just published, is about a man who goes missing and reappears as a ghost. Is the dark-comic Russian fabulist Victor Pelevin Joseph Heller's heir? He, along with various critics, thinks so. In fact, he's convinced that "Catch-22" is not about the Pacific War in the forties but about Russia last winter. Juan Manuel de Prada is the only one here who hasn't been published in English, but his literary thriller "La Tempestad" won Spain's prestigious Premio Planeta. Lawrence Norfolk, the Laurence Sterne of West London, has an English publisher, of course. But what does it tell us that his novel "Lemprière's Dictionary" sold better in translation than in Britain?

And what do these writers tell us about European fiction? It's too early to say—after all, they're only thirty-five, if not younger—except that storytelling has probably never been more inventively re-inventive, and that it's going to be a good time for the novel.

—BILL BUFORD AND DEBORAH TREISMAN

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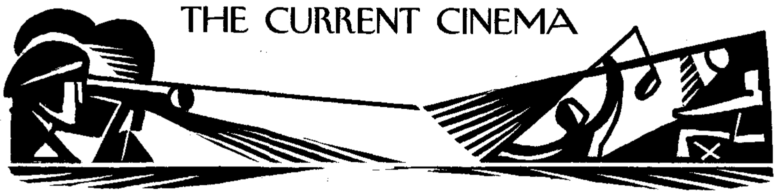


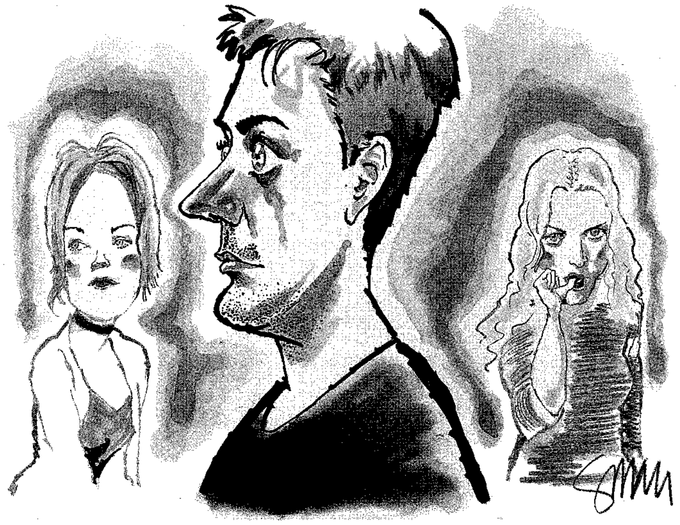
THE CURRENT CINEMA

THREE'S A CROWD

Why is Robert Downey, Jr., such a seductive scoundrel?

BY ANTHONY LANE

IT does not take a fertile imagination to work out what "Two Girls and a Guy" is all about. It sounds less like a movie than like a headline from that noble arena of American fiction, the Letters page of *Penthouse*, although it is worth pointing out to those approaching the picture with high pornographic hopes that they will be drastically disappointed. Apart from one brief rush of love-making that is mostly sweaters and belt buckles, and a passage from Brahms's Horn Trio, fertile imaginings are about as good as it gets.



Natasha Wagner and Heather Graham as the two girls to Downey's guy.

Written and directed by James Toback, the story starts on a doorstep in New York, where a couple of strangers, Carla (Heather Graham) and Lou (Natasha Gregson Wagner), find themselves awaiting the return of their respective boyfriends. The women get to talking and soon discover that they are, in fact, waiting for the same boyfriend. Lou, the more forthright of the two, breaks into his apartment through a window; she buzzes Carla in, and the pair of them then pass a civilized hour discussing the man in question and gauging the exact desirability of having a meat slicer remove the portion of him that has caused all the trouble. They just have time to hide before he walks through the door.

Thus far, the actresses have seemed unnerved by having the stage to themselves, and have delivered their lines with a cramped, shouting quality that takes you back, quite unfairly, to the days of the school play. But this stiffness subsides when Blake (Robert Downey, Jr.) turns up. For one thing, he comes in *singing*.

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DAVID SMALL

Not mumbling snippets of R.E.M., as the majority of sad men do, but thunderously carolling the Vivaldi "Gloria." He sings every part, including the soprano line, and thus introduces the theme of the whole movie: Blake is too bored, or too bad, to stick to a single tune.

Not much happens in Toback's film; it makes "Rope" look like "The Fall of the Roman Empire." There is suspense, of a sort, when Carla and Lou stride from the shadows and confront Blake with the matching halves of his split life; even he, the Houdini of the boudoir, has the grace to look floored by this latest development. But he gathers himself, or his various selves, and spends the next hour trying to dig his way out of trouble. "As an actor, I think you should give me some leeway," he says. Oh, please. Reactions to this entreaty differ: the girls give it the sneer it deserves—Lou labels Blake "a lying, mugging, misogynistic, unemployable, short, loft-inheriting, piece-of-shit fraud"—but the director is half in love with the notion of a helplessly theatrical soul. "Two Girls and a Guy" may sound rude and choleric, but underneath the bluster there are surges of idealism or, at any rate, of what you might call the higher onanism. Toback is desperately seeking metaphysical answers to the vexed question of why people—women as well as men—like to sleep around. The one possibility that, somewhat endearingly, never occurs to him is: they just do.

For all its blur of confrontation, "Two Girls and a Guy" has a way of ducking the practicalities. Would Carla and Lou really hang around and give Blake the chance to win them over, or even to win them back? Wouldn't they just trap his private parts in the piano lid and get out of town? The truth is that what makes this movie hang together is the presence of Robert Downey, Jr., who has racked up yet another movie that credits, or defames, him with sexual pliancy. He was the proud serial flirt of "The Pick-Up Artist," also directed by Toback; he was gay in "Home for the Holidays" and "One Night Stand"; and he was a natural for the leading role in "Chaplin," which tells you pretty much all you need to know.

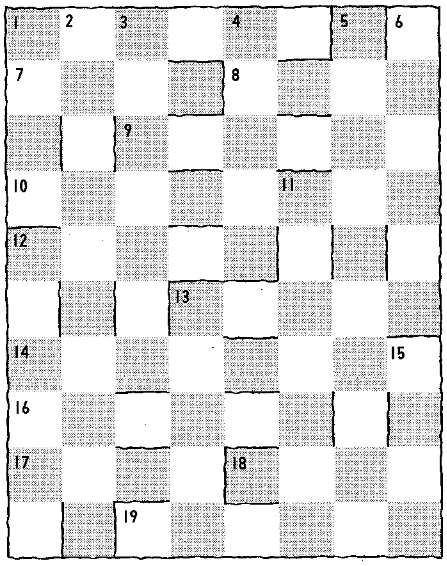
It is in Downey's eyes, I suspect, that his problems start: they have always been dark-rimmed, as if he liked to start his working day with a dab of mascara. Even without makeup, he looks ready for action, or for acting, and that is why so many directors have latched onto his willingness—his reflex capacity, almost—to feign and foil. Back in the eighties, in silly teen farces like "Weird Science," Downey sported a self-mocking soulfulness that felt more emotionally educated than anything offered by his damp-witted contemporaries in the Brat Pack. Here, it was plain, was a man absolutely not to be trusted; if you ever said to him, as he arrived on the set, "Just be yourself," the poor guy would probably explode.

Whatever the source of such volatility, it makes all of Downey's heroes look like villains, and the movies have yet to present him with anything so solemn that he feels unable to raise an eyebrow. Conversely, I always detect a pinch of pure menace sprinkled over his lighter roles. Nobody gave much thought to the sluggish comedy "Only You," but Downey was wonderful as a man who falls in love by pretending (guess what?) to be somebody else. Watch him idle around Marisa Tomei's bedroom, handing her the perfect shoes and earrings through the bathroom door; he's only being helpful, but he also has the unmistakable air of a cat burglar, preying on her good faith, not to mention her heart. After that most delicate of touches, it is dismaying to see him, in "Two Girls and a Guy," rant and bleed in front of a mirror as Blake tries to work out exactly who he is. It's a fine demonstration of a disintegrating self; but it's a monotone, and it hems the actor in.

You can see why Toback should circle back to Downey just now; anyone with a calamitous drug addiction who has recently done time for possession of crack, heroin, and a weapon is a godsend to a director who relishes the exorcising of demons. Against this background, "Two Girls and a Guy" becomes illicitly fascinating, but what stays with you is Downey's determination not so much to indulge himself as to make light of his predicament. Toback's ill-judged attempt to load his already burdened hero with an Oedipus complex—Blake phones his mother at regular intervals throughout the film—is beautifully shrugged off by Downey when he gazes at the two girls and says, "Obviously, you've never seen my Hamlet." Later, as their accusations mount, he turns sharply and asks, "Who do you think I am, Nero?" James Toback wants all Rome to burn; Carla and Lou, like the rest of us, are happy to stay and watch their boyfriend fiddle. ♦

8×10 CRYPTIC

NO. 42 BY MONIKA ZOOK



ACROSS

1 Spanish corn and asparagus pieces (6)
7 French article about one new profession (4)
8 Someone coming into money among the Irish (4)
9 Valley houses English king after Queen Anne (6)
10 Maria ran off with an Italian sauce (8)
12 Leaders of Sweden and Norway are in a trap (5)
13 Cheer for the Spanish at movie's end (5)
14 Hard, rough climate around Finland's heart (8)
16 Before game of chance, leader of Belgium is drunk (6)
17 Different trains at Estonia's capital (4)
18 Travel stops popular with Poles (4)
19 Rebellion in United Nations and others (6)

DOWN

1 Problem of numbers engulfing Portugal's last ghetto (4)
2 Playwright's country valley circled by Italian river (10)
3 Reëstablish a scion with English vessel (7)
4 Reportedly brownish French river (5)
5 Russian plane shares in people's movements (10)
6 Oil country of Europe by the sound (6)
11 A couple from Basel isolated seafood (7)
12 Bachelor in Rome's prepared grave (6)
13 Dined in English school at hearing (5)
15 Fee upset Scot (4)

• •

The solution to puzzle No. 41 appears on page 161. For a free copy of "The New Yorker's Guide to Solving Cryptic Crosswords," please send your fax number or a stamped, self-addressed envelope to "Solvers' Guide," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. For an electronic version, send an E-mail to puzzleguide@newyorker.com.

SHOUTS & MURMURS

EUROCALENDAR '99

BY BRUCE McCALL

January 1, 1999: The currencies of all eleven member nations of the European Monetary Union are locked irrevocably to a new single currency, the euro.

January 4: Over strong E.U. protests, Liechtenstein issues a revenue-producing "collector currency," the "licho," with lucky serial numbers and cash prizes.

January 21: In "economic self-defense" against Liechtenstein's collector-currency monopoly, Luxembourg announces the "luxo," watermarked with naked Eurobabes in eye-popping poses. One luxo is claimed to be worth six lichos.

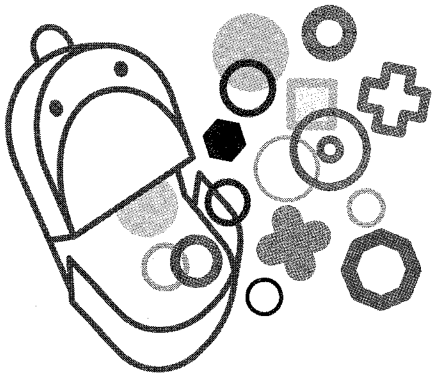
February 6: The high-concept lichos and luxos spill across borders and drive down the value of the plain-Jane euro. The E.U. responds to the threat by jazzing up the euro's design. Out: Eurodreamers and Founders. In: Europe's Most Wanted.

February 12: San Marino's Finance Minister storms an E.U. monetary conference brandishing a new, supplementary "souvenir" currency, the peppermint-coated, lickable "sano." Meant to fortify his nation's sundries-based economy against the licho and the luxo, the sano is pegged at twice the value of a luxo.

March 7: Millions of sluglike "play coins," which happen to fit every parking meter in the E.U., are distributed in door-to-door drops across Europe at night. Andorra is practicing economic terrorism, and enrages the E.U. by paying its fine in sanos. "WHO NEEDS EUROS?," headlines blare.

March 10: Convening an emergency session, the E.U. Commission votes to bolster the battered euro by again changing its design. Out: Europe's Most Wanted. In: Euro-Train Wrecks.

April 12: Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, and San Marino announce the formation of a breakaway mini-monetary union. The euro is banned; the official currency is the "lilusano."



May 4: Parker Brothers, the games behemoth, floods the E.U. with a new denomination of Monopoly money, the "mono," and announces that five billion monos may be redeemed for a new V.W. Golf. The value of the euro plunges further on the Frankfurt bourse.

May 19: Booed as "Eurogoons," E.U. monetary police stage hundreds of midnight raids in the eleven member states, ransacking homes where Monopoly games are in progress to confiscate and destroy monos. Confidence in the euro is shaken, perhaps for good.

July 11: Frantic eleventh-hour E.U. negotiations fail to prevent the principality of Monaco from introducing a new gold "lucky coin," the "mona." Hours later, the E.U.'s worst nightmare comes true: its own aviation consortium, Airbus Industrie, is forced to accept payment for a new aircraft order from Austria in monas, or else lose the deal to Boeing.

July 15: Its back against the monetary wall, the E.U. sacks its director of currency design and issues new "Euro Space Alien"-themed hologram euros.

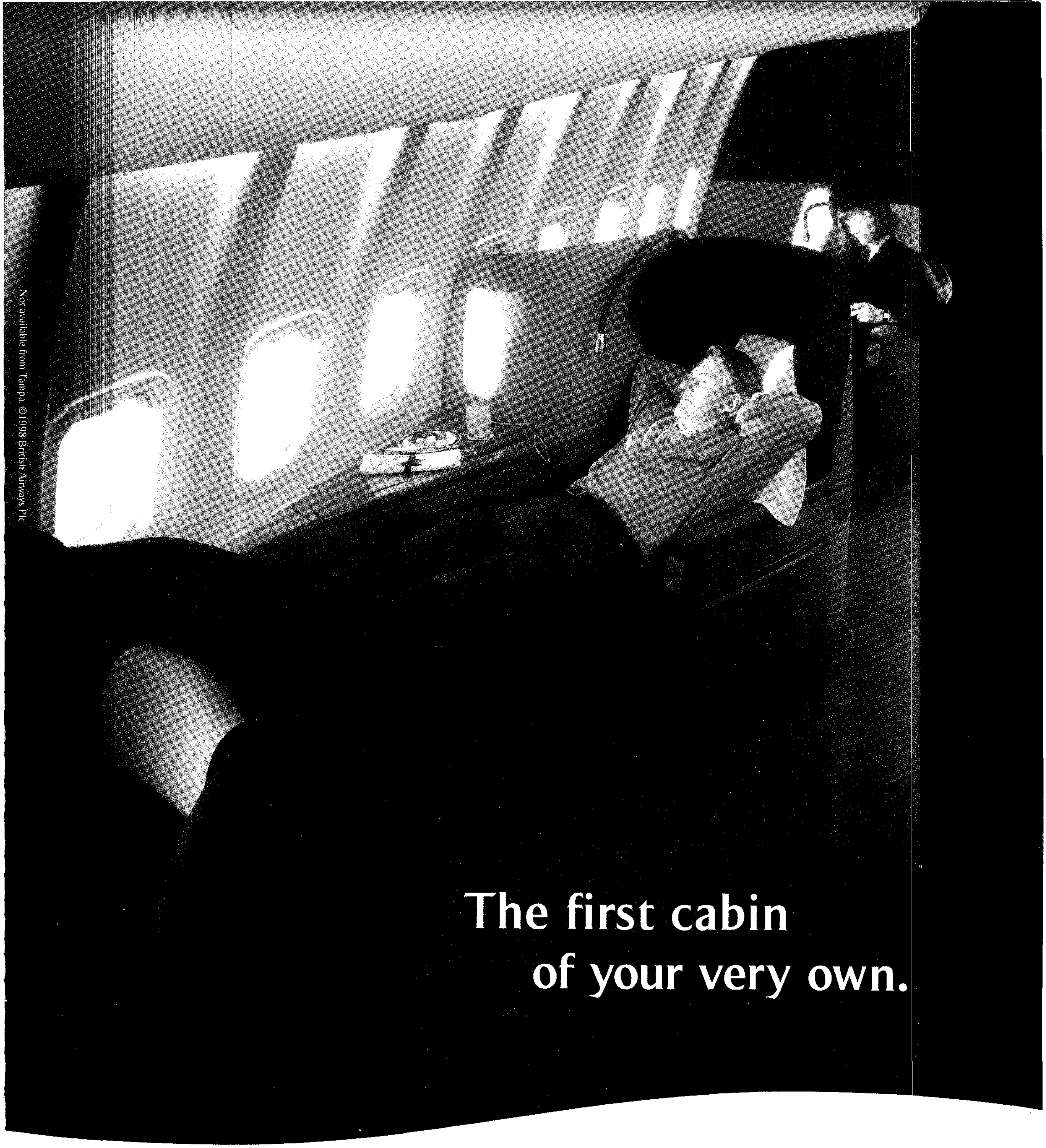
September 29: The U.K. offers to end its long vacillation and join the E.U., but only if it can pay its dues in "commemorative currency"—i.e., the "uko," a paper CD that plays fifteen minutes of the Spice Girls. On its economic knees, the E.U. has no option but to accept.

October 18: With the euro barely surviving against myriad alternative currencies, Belgium issues the "belgo," a coin-shaped marzipan lozenge, and is denounced by the E.U. as a "Eurojackal." Schoolyard speculators drive the belgo's value up, up, up, and the euro's value down, down, down.

November 10: A bitter blow from Germany. Its "deutscho," commemorating the thousandth anniversary of the *Blutwurst*, is a coin-cum-silicon-chip that jams police radar and makes a mockery of E.U. highway speed limits.

December 31: The euro is withdrawn from circulation—but, say E.U. officials, "it does not represent the end of the age-old dream of an economically unified Europe, only a new beginning." The E.U. commission is already holding meetings with executives from a leading American food franchise on the feasibility of a tie-in deal for a new meat-based currency. Code name: Euromac. ♦

ANDERS WENNGREN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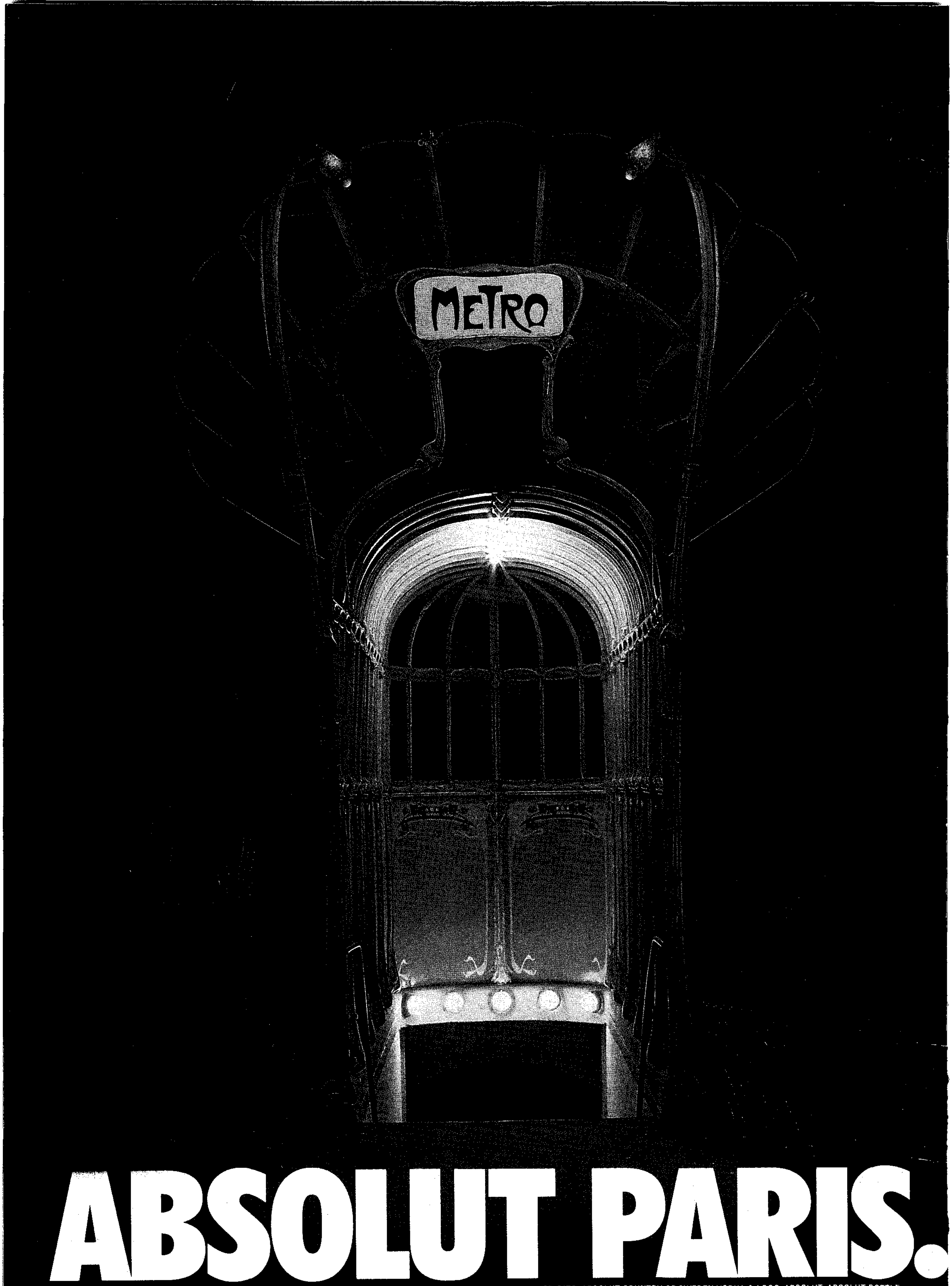

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